

# A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER



With my move to L.A. this spring, I've had far more contact with other people in the field than I did before. As a result, in addition to the projects I was planning on putting out, I've had some new projects come my way.

The first one you'll see is a monthly anthology title, **Revolver**. This will be my second anthology title (**Black Zeppelin** being the first) and my second monthly title (**Ms. Tree** being the other). Since the concept of the book is to cover different genres every few issues (spotlighting on an artist for each genre or theme) it should, over time, provide lots of variety without so much variation within a single issue that you get stuck buying it for the sake of one story. This seems to be a common complaint, myself included, about anthologies. The first three issues are going to be science-fiction issues, with Jack Harris and Steve Ditko getting the spotlight on their series, **Star Gulder**. I like this story from the moment I laid eyes on it, and each of the first three issues is going to open with a chapter from **Star Gulder**, then continue with science fiction stories from other artists. I'm hoping to line up three issues of fantasy after that, but nothing is definite as of this writing.

In January I will have two new projects, one a new bi-monthly series, the other a one-shot special. The special is Ernie Colon's **Manimal**. This is a fictional tale that looks at the very real horror of Holocaust. Although this story has seen print before (in *Hot Stuff*), many people did not see that version. I also feel that the artwork was never fully appreciated when it was printed in color. I'm hoping that with this printing we can gain a wider audience for this tale.

The new series beginning in January is **Strata**, a bi-monthly black-and-white series. The story centers on Charles Flambeau (a Scotland Yard detective) and Arthur and Lancelot, Flambeau's "guides" (who just happen to be otters) on a "flat Earth" where Mother Nature is having a nervous breakdown. (Did I mention that this is a fantasy?) There is plenty of swashbuckling adventure as well as lots of slapstick humor, with some underlying questions about the nature of reality. It's written by Joe Judt, with pencils by Ray Murtaugh and inks by Jim Bronzman.

Next month—I'll tell you a bit about my other two (or possibly three) series coming out in February or March. You can't say I haven't been busy lately... well, actually you can say it, but it wouldn't be true. Now, if I could only find my way out of this pile of comic books. Something tells me it's time to find an assistant, even if it's only to show me where the heck the door is!

Deni

## Ms. TREE

Published twelve times a year by Renegade Press, 10408 Oxnard Street, North Hollywood, CA., 91606. **MS. TREE** is a work of fiction. All the characters and events portrayed herein are fictional, and any resemblance to real people or incidents is coincidental. All contents © 1985 Max Collins and Terry Beatty. Any inquiries regarding use of the characters, images, or situations depicted should be addressed to Deni Loubert. No unauthorized reproduction allowed except for review or other Journalistic purposes. Advertising rates furnished on request. Printed in Canada by Preney Print and Litho Inc., Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

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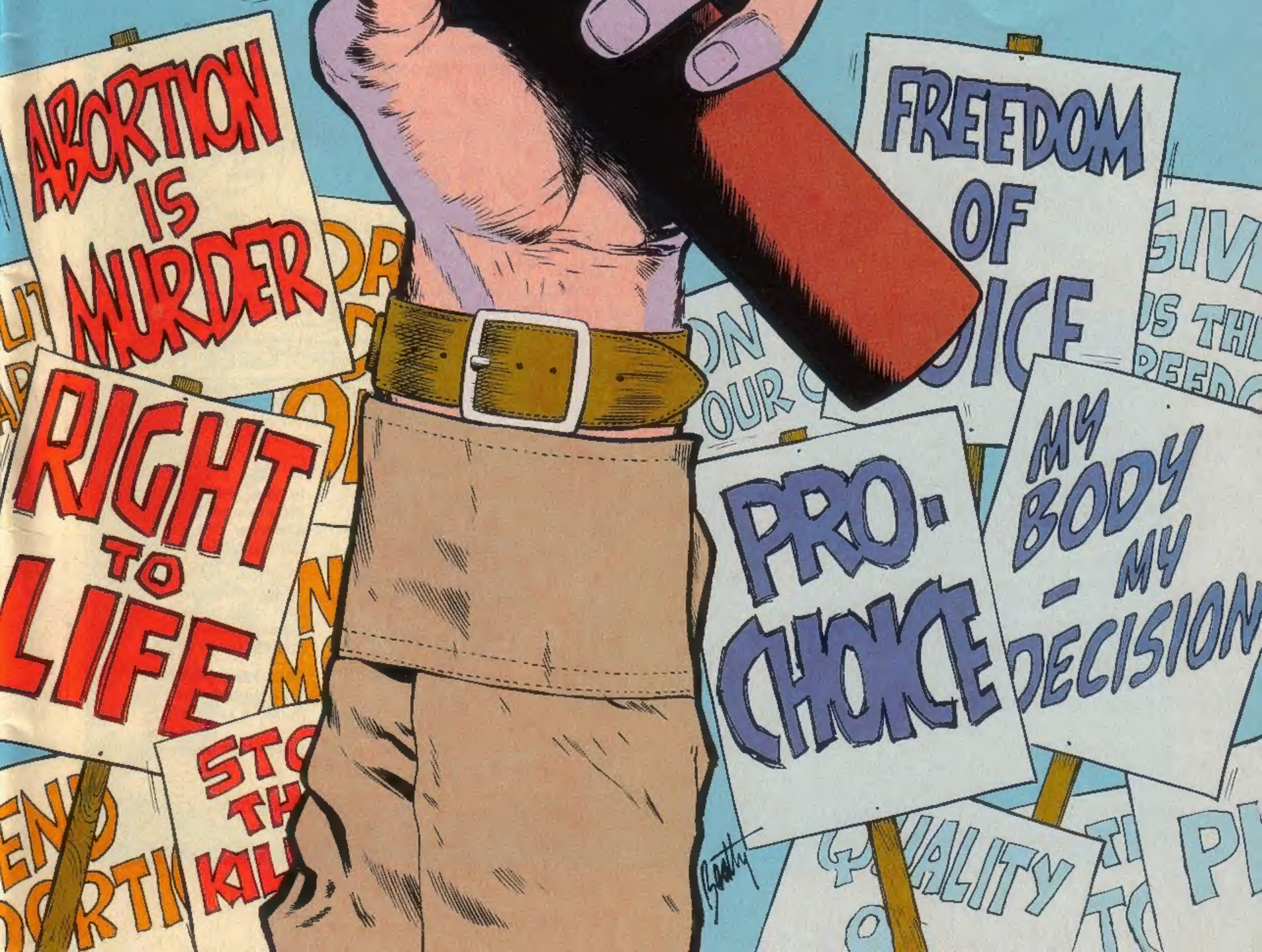
MAX COLLINS and  
TERRY BEATTY'S

# M. TREE™

"Right to  
DIE"

200  
CANADA  
170  
IN U.S.

22  
OCT





# Ms. TREE "Right to Die"

© 1985

by Max Collins and Terry Beatty

Chapter One

## DEATH FACTORY



LETTERING & ART ASSIGT: GARY KATO





"WE'RE JUST TELLING IT LIKE IT IS, MS. TREE."

# Vigilante P.I. declared "Public Menace"

By Cary Grady and Alan Dugan  
City Times

An official statement today from the Police Commissioner's office attacked the recent vigilante actions of private detective, Michael Tree.

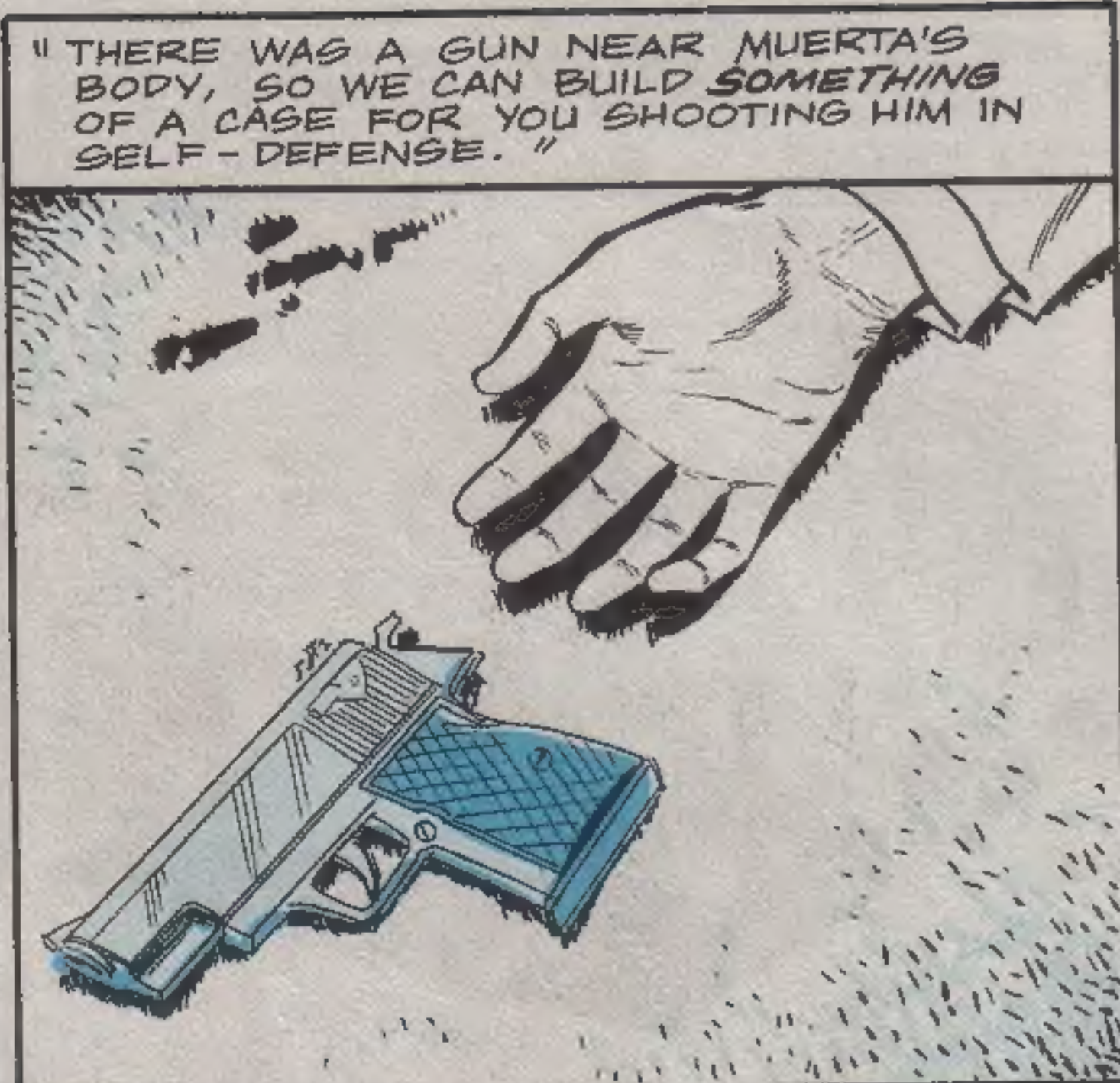
Although one of Ms. Tree's operatives, Dan Green, has been cleared of murder charges by the testimony of a Muerta witness, there are still many questions regarding the legality of Ms. Tree's latest actions.

Ms. Tree, whose history of killings in "self defense" is longer than that of any veteran of the city's police has once again been

DOZENS OF KILLS TO HER "CREDIT"

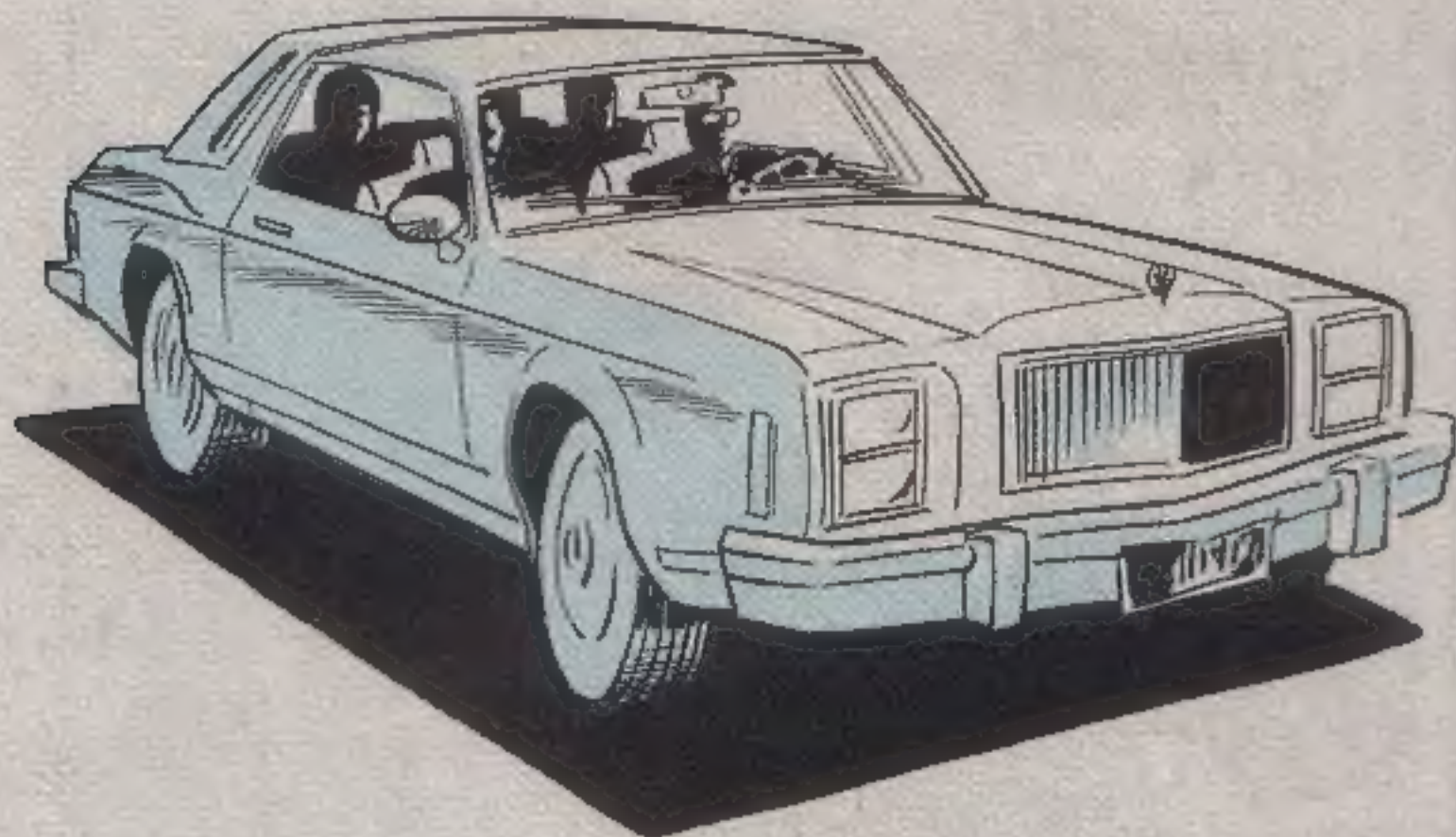






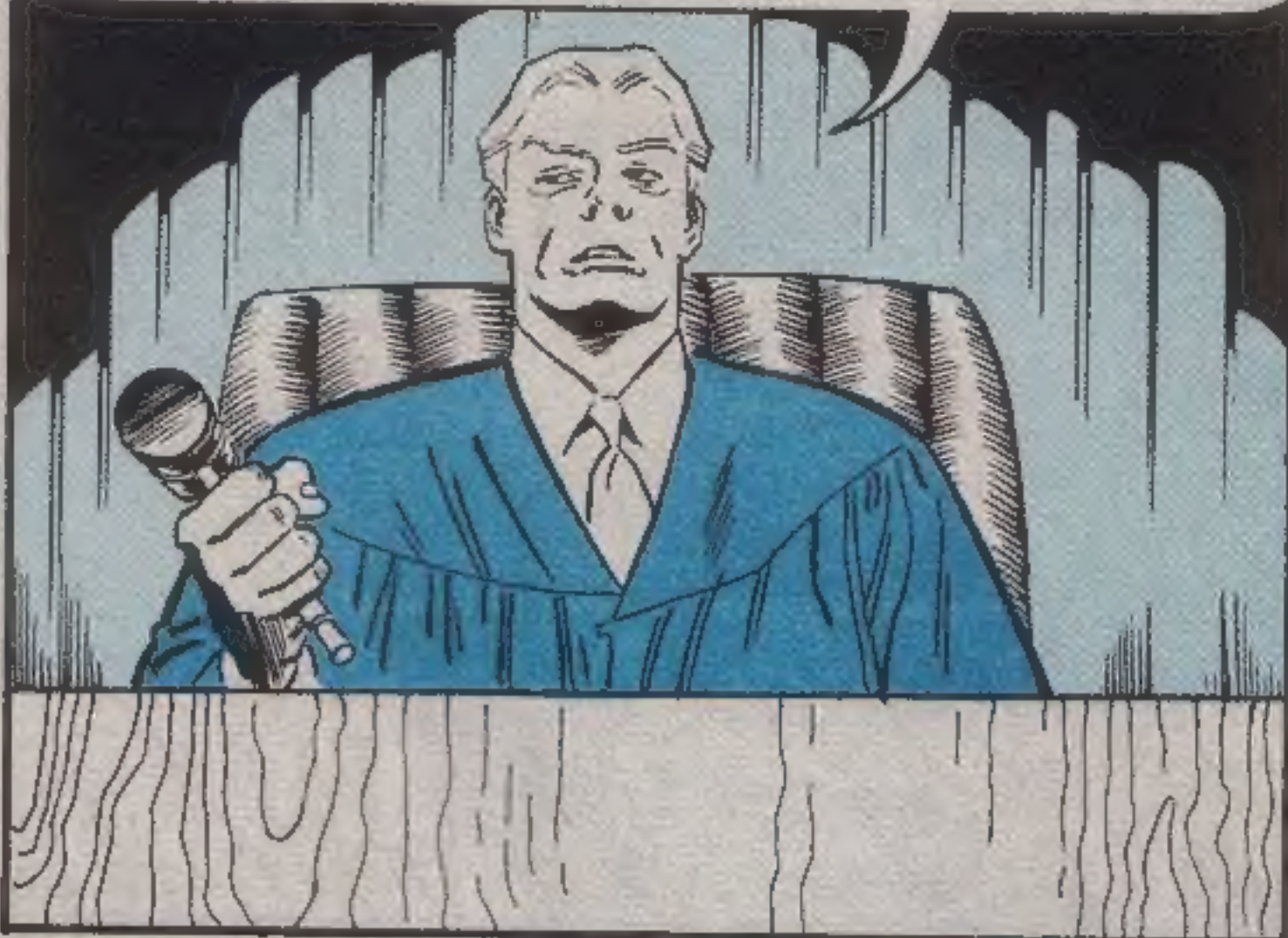


"HOWEVER," ATTORNEY CAWL CONTINUED,  
"WE NEED YOU TO KEEP YOUR NOSE  
CLEAN — YOUR P.I. LICENSE REMAINS  
SUSPENDED AND YOUR GUN LICENSE AS WELL —"



"THE JUDGE STRICTLY WARNED YOU TO  
**BEHAVE YOURSELF** OR YOUR BAIL WILL  
BE REVOKED —"

SHOULD YOU TAKE THE LAW INTO YOUR OWN  
HANDS AGAIN, GOD HAVE MERCY ON YOU,  
YOUNG LADY — BECAUSE THIS COURT WON'T—

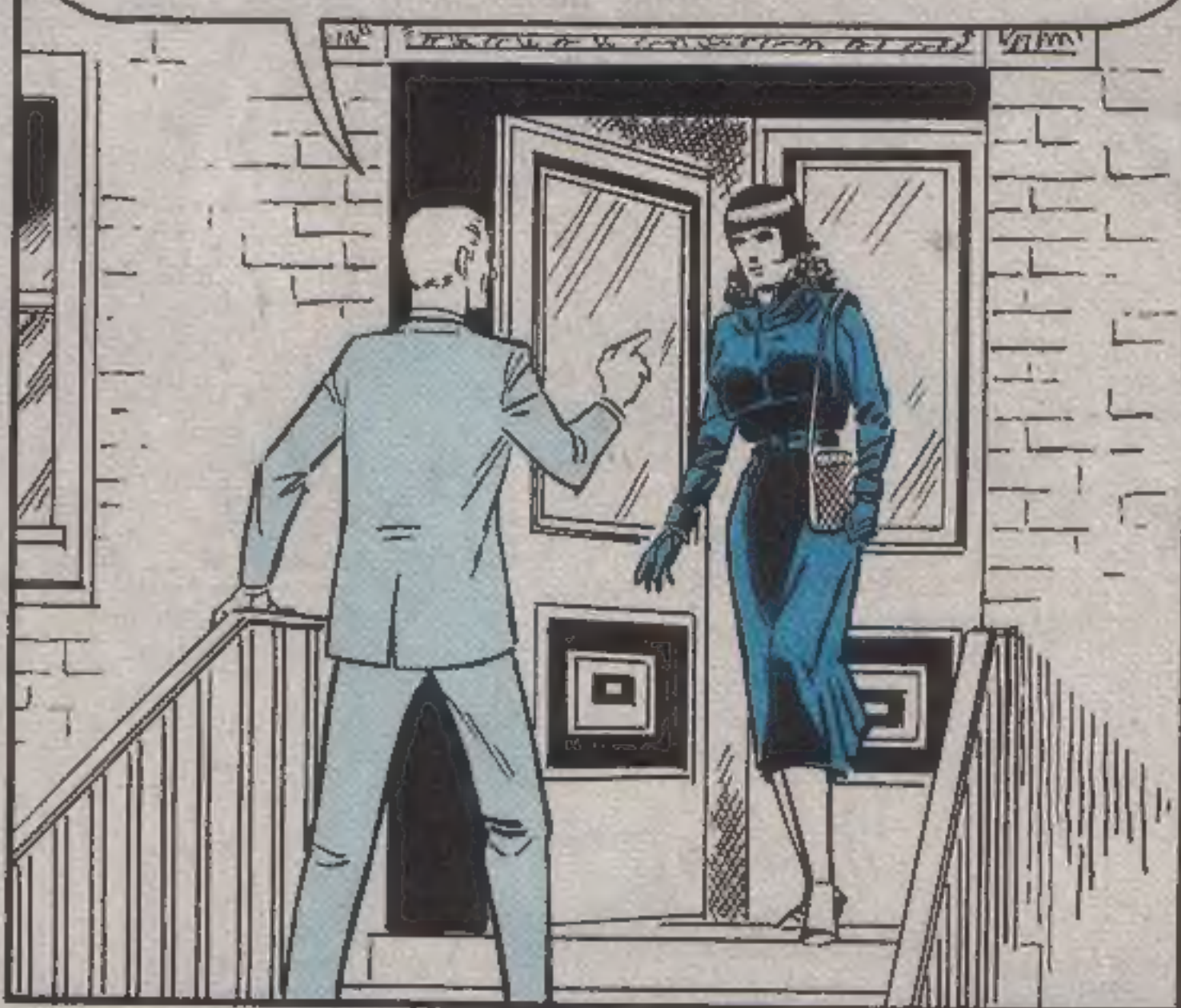


I'LL BE A GOOD GIRL.  
I'M NOT EVEN GOING INTO  
THE OFFICE, TILL THIS IS  
CLEARED UP.

GOOD.  
NO INVOLVEMENT  
WITH ANY CASES —



JUST GO UP TO THAT APARTMENT AND READ  
AND RELAX AND COOL OFF — I'LL BE OUT  
HERE IN THE **REAL** WORLD, WORKING TO  
**CLEAR** YOU —



BUT MICHAEL — I MUST  
WARN YOU — A TEMPORARY  
INSANITY PLEA MAY BE OUR  
BEST WAY OUT OF THIS —

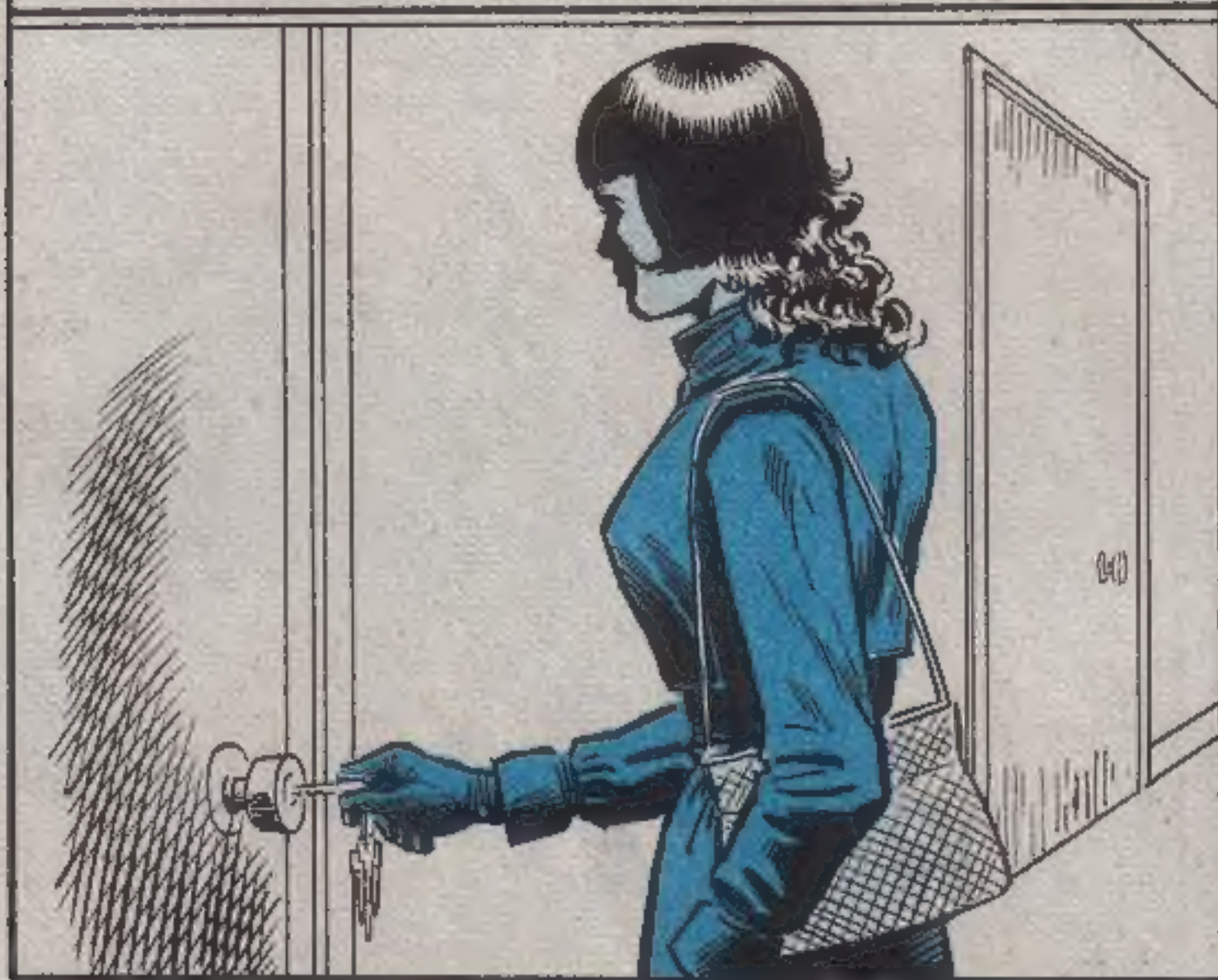


GEE, ISN'T THAT AWFUL. IMAGINE ME  
GETTING A REPUTATION FOR BEING  
**UNSTABLE** —

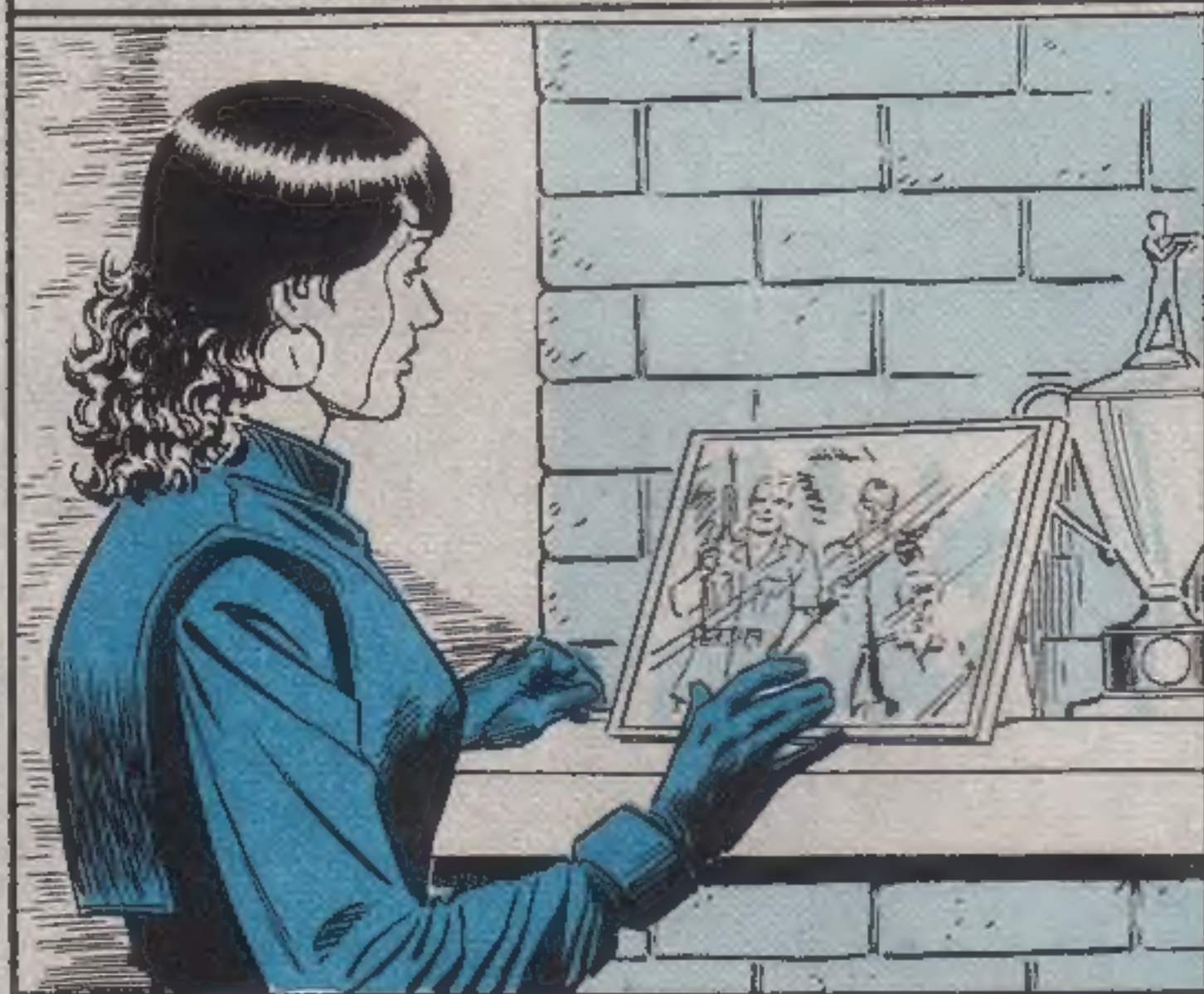




I WAS STAYING IN THE APARTMENT THAT HAD BEEN MY LATE HUSBAND'S. IT WASN'T WIDELY KNOWN THAT I'D KEPT THE LEASE ON THE PLACE —



AND THERE WERE TIMES WHEN A HIDEAWAY — EVEN A HIDEOUT — CAME IN HANDY. BESIDES, I LIKED THE FEEL OF MIKE IN THE PLACE.



EXCUSE ME.



PUT UP YOUR GODDAMN HANDS.

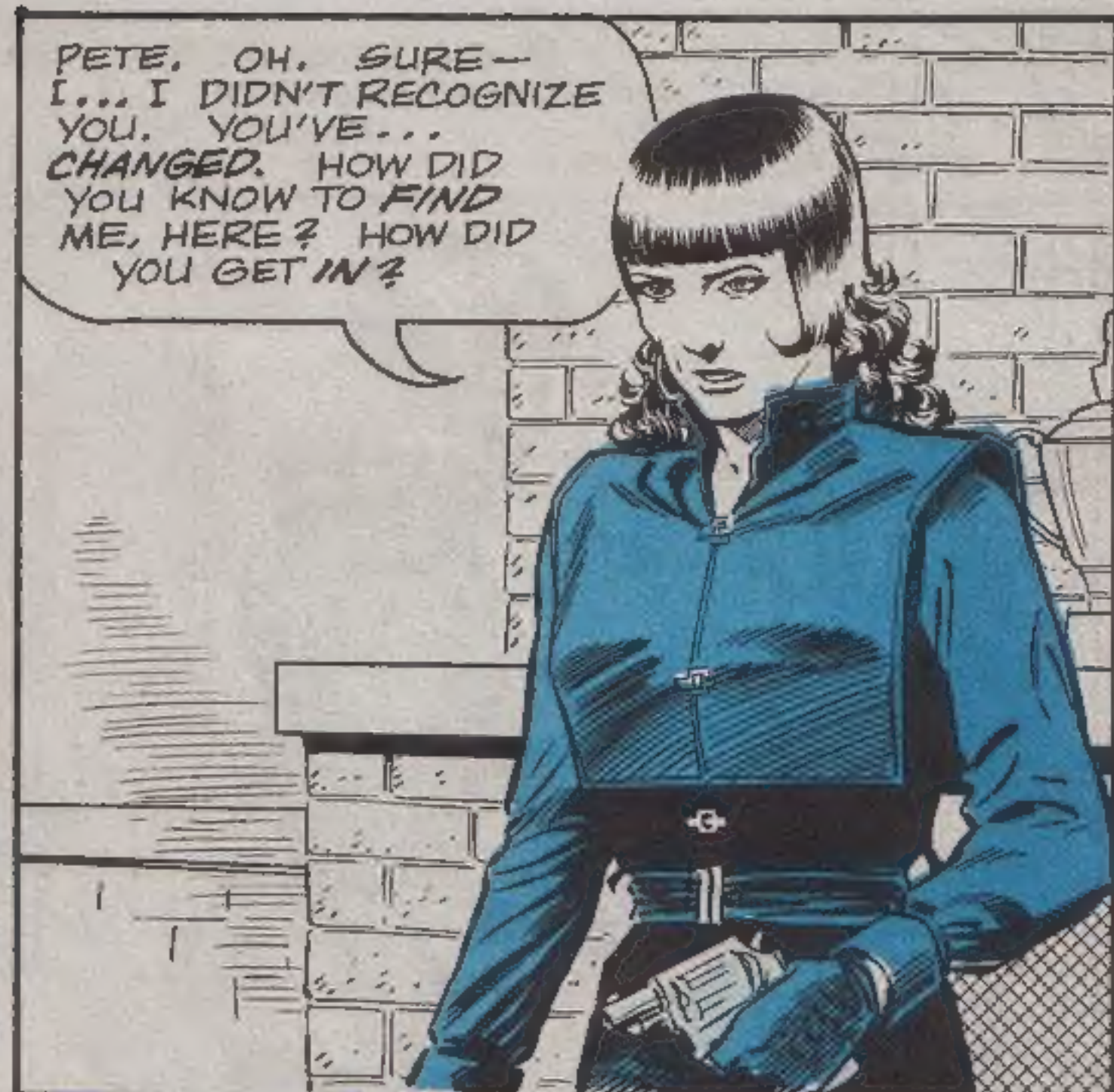


UH — MS. TREE — MICHAEL — I ... I'M SORRY ... I ...

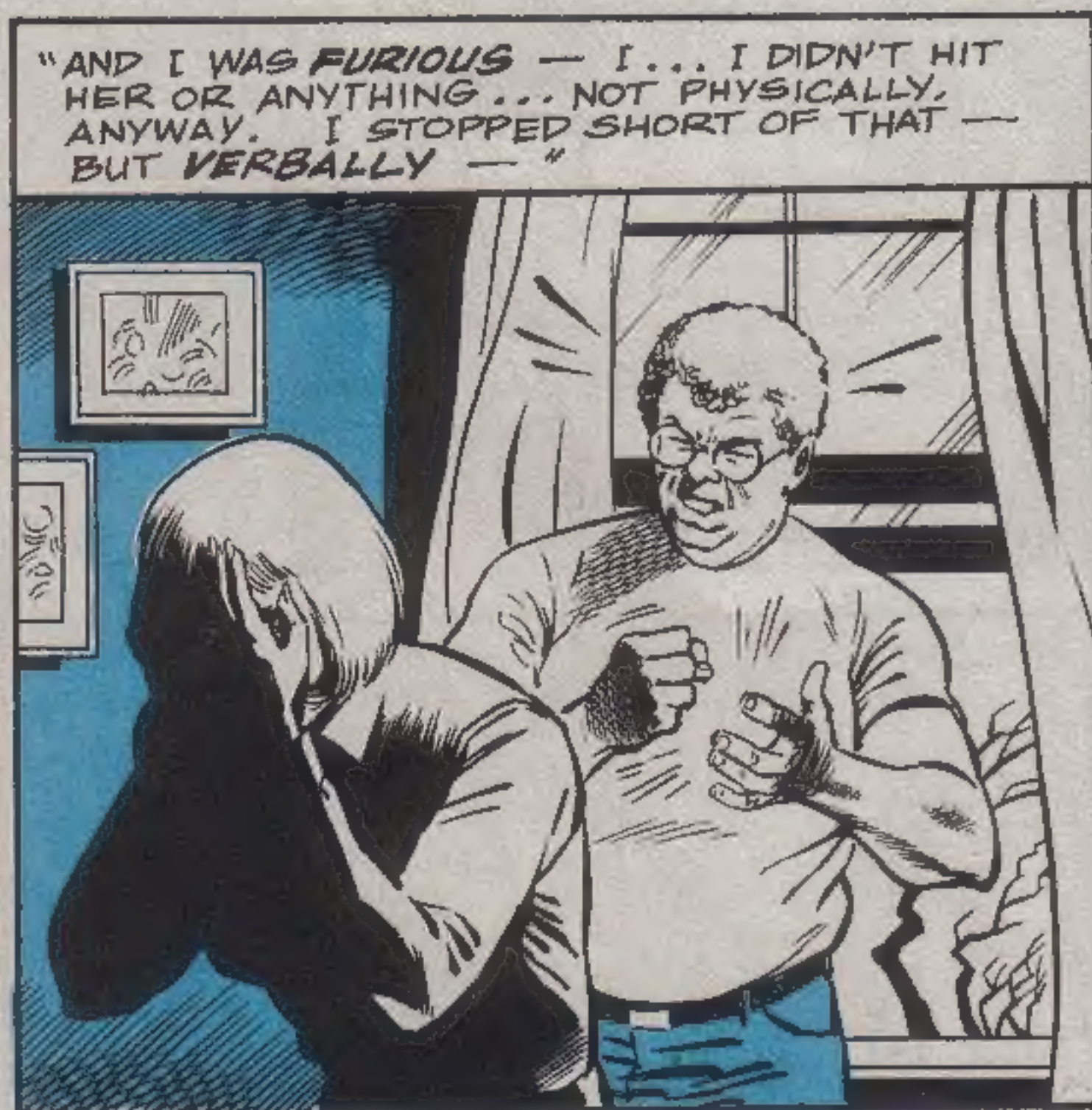
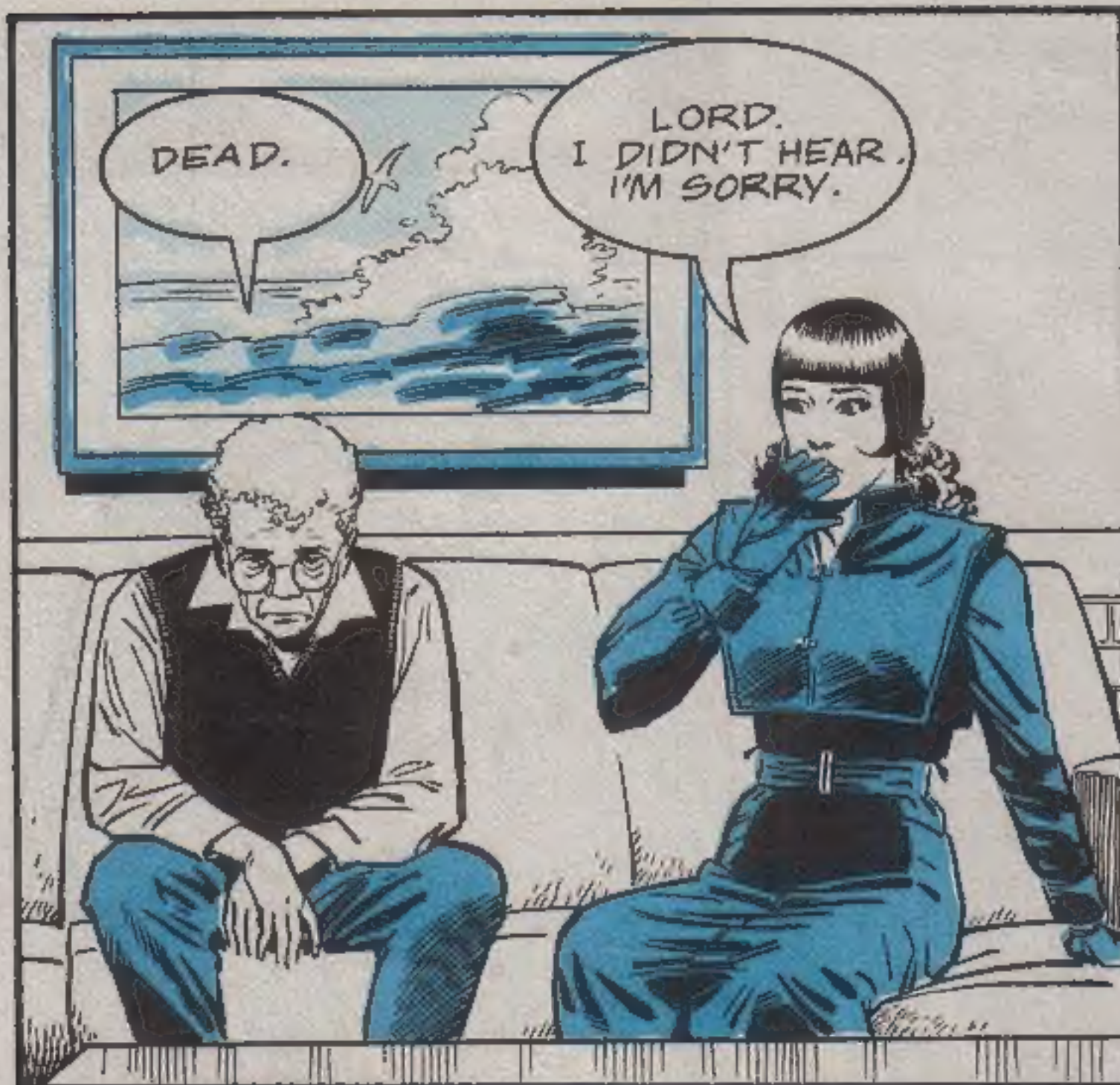
WHO ARE YOU ?  
WHAT ARE YOU  
DOING HERE ?







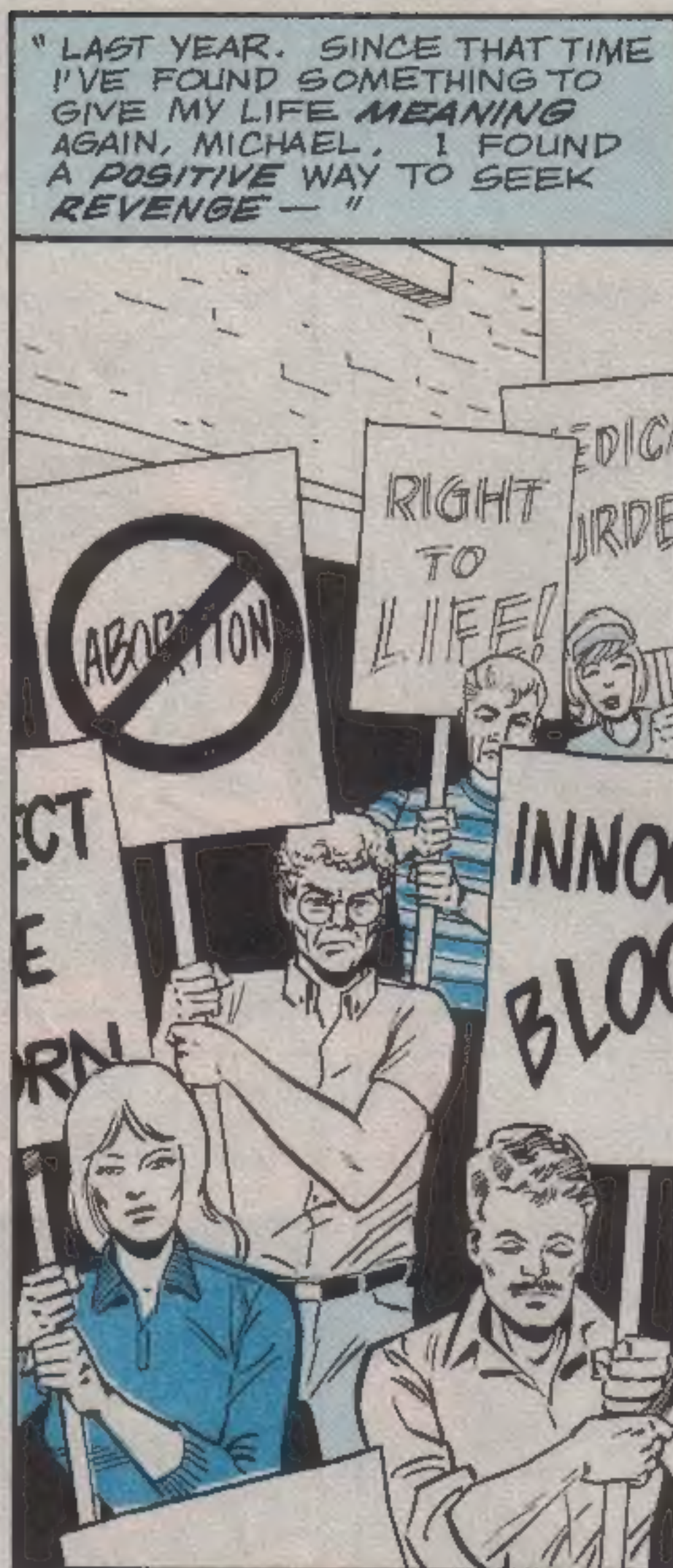








PETE,  
I'M SO VERY SORRY.  
WHEN **WAS** ALL  
THIS ?



"LAST YEAR. SINCE THAT TIME  
I'VE FOUND SOMETHING TO  
GIVE MY LIFE **MEANING**  
AGAIN, MICHAEL. I FOUND  
A **POSITIVE** WAY TO SEEK  
**REVENGE** — "



WHAT'S THAT ?

I'VE BEEN  
ACTIVE WITH  
**F. E. T. U. S. —**  
THE **ANTI-ABORTION**  
GROUP.



"FREEDOM, EXISTENCE AND TRUTH FOR  
UNBORN SOULS," ISN'T THAT IT ?  
THAT'S A PRETTY **RADICAL** GROUP,  
ISN'T IT, PETE — ?

NOT **RADICAL**  
**ENOUGH,**  
MICHAEL —



"THAT'S WHY I'M **HERE** — THERE'S AN  
ABORTION CLINIC DOWNTOWN — THE **MENGER'S**  
CLINIC — A REGULAR ABORTION MILL —  
RUNNING **DOZENS** OF WOMEN THROUGH ITS  
DEATH FACTORY EVERY DAY — "





I'VE HEARD  
OF IT,  
BUT —

BUT NOTHING —  
IT'S AN OFFENSE IN  
THE EYE OF MAN  
AND GOD —

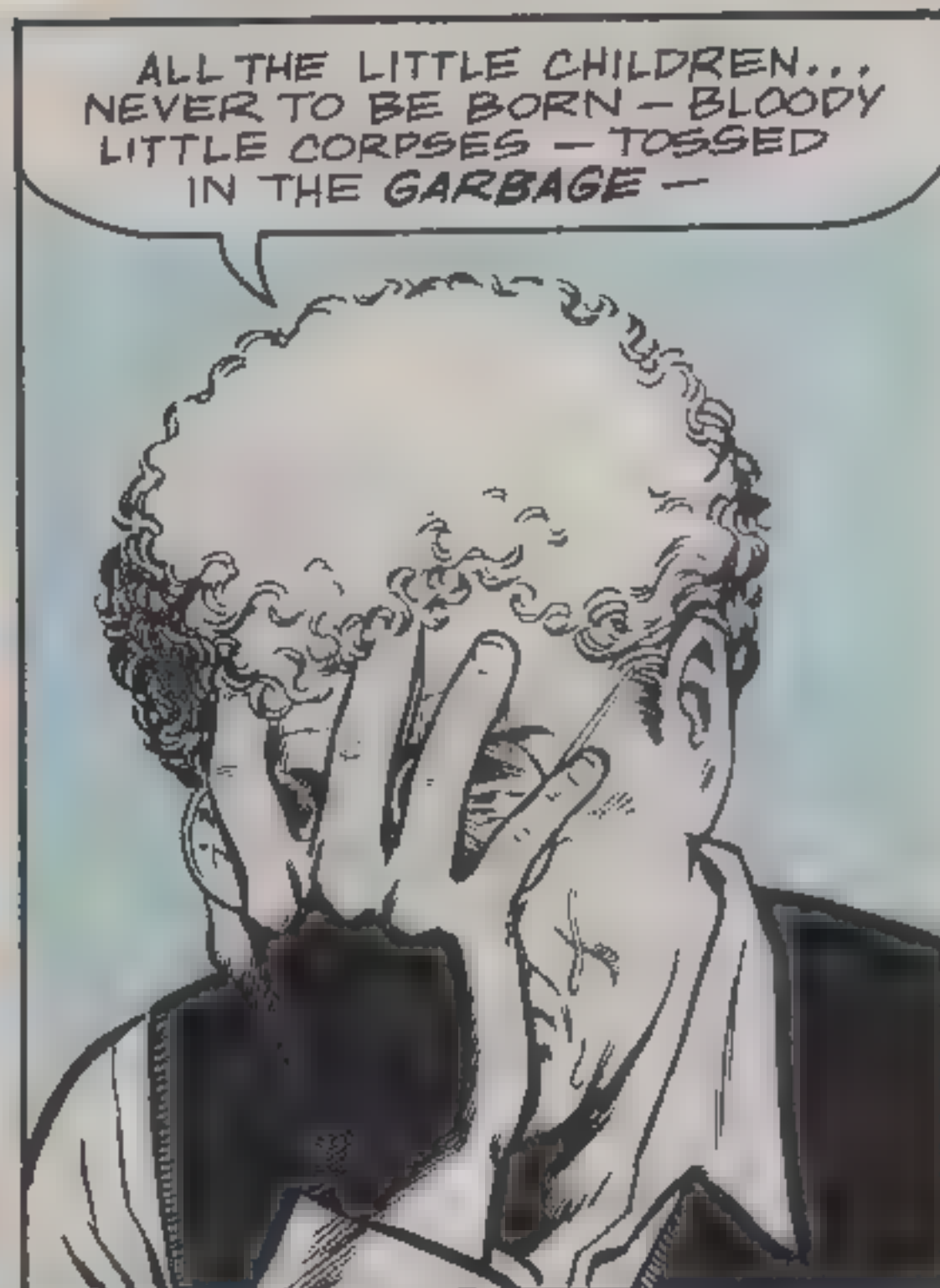


AND I WANT YOU TO HELP  
ME DESTROY IT —



HOW, PETE? HAVE THEY  
BROKEN THE LAW IN SOME  
WAY — PERHAPS MY ATTORNEY...

THEY'VE  
BROKEN  
GOD'S LAW —

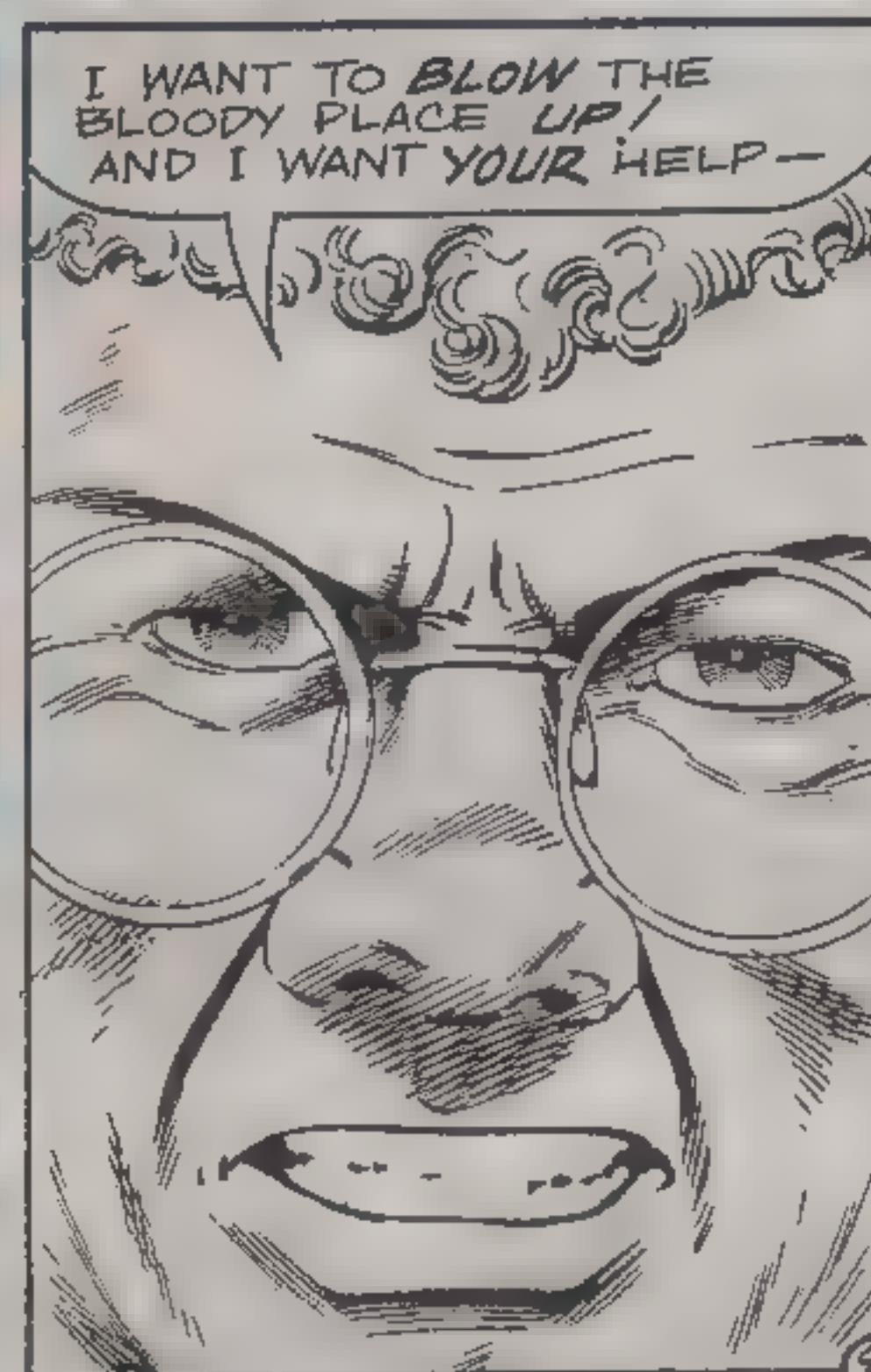


ALL THE LITTLE CHILDREN...  
NEVER TO BE BORN — BLOODY  
LITTLE CORPSES — TOSSED  
IN THE GARBAGE —



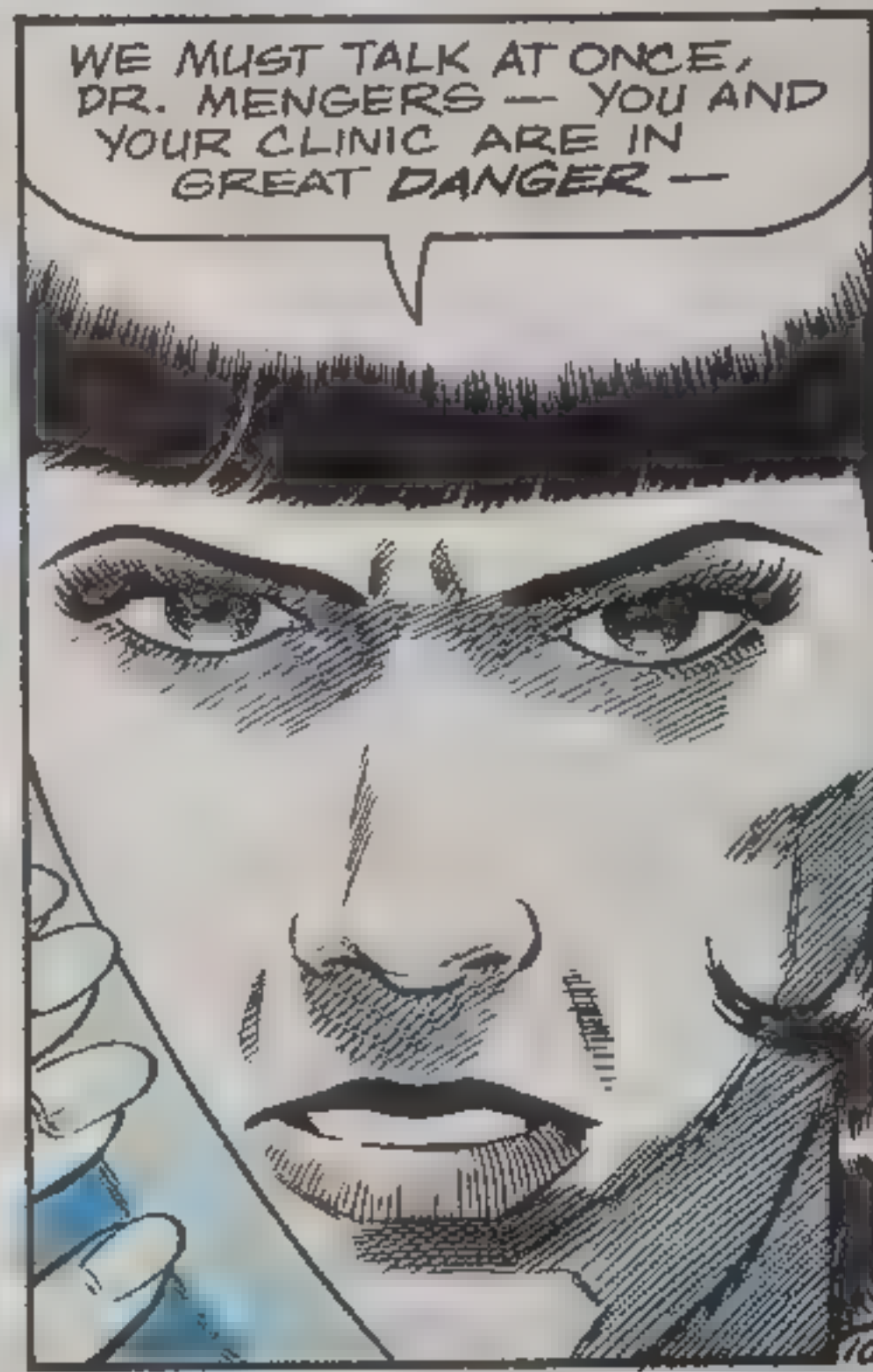
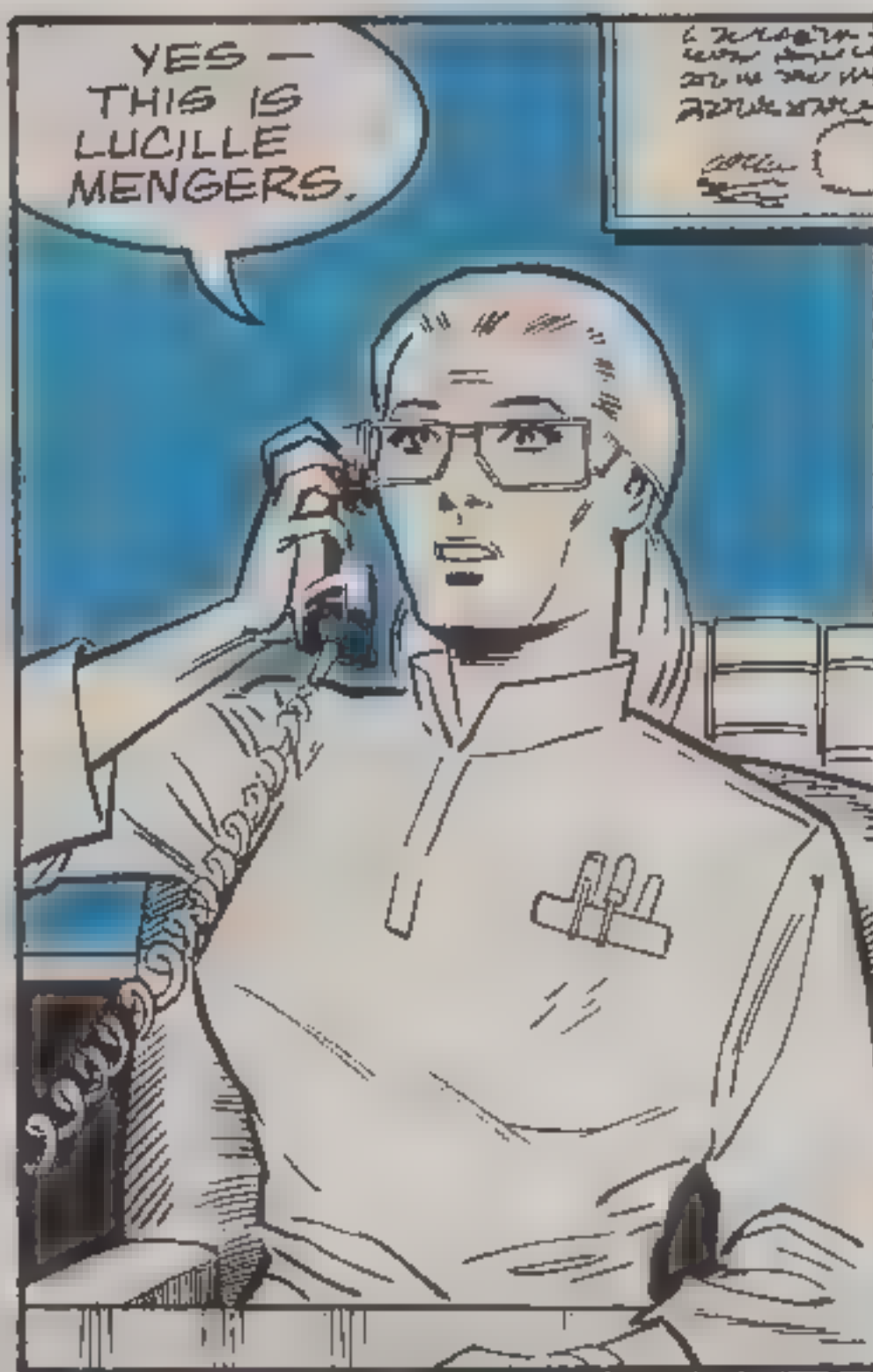
THEY  
MUST BE  
STOPPED!

PETE...



I WANT TO BLOW THE  
BLOODY PLACE UP!  
AND I WANT YOUR HELP —





TO BE CONTINUED —





Address all letters of  
comment to:

**SWAK**  
P O BOX 1007  
MUSCATINE, IA  
52761

Dear Max and Terry,

To quote a certain mystery writer don't they know it's just a story? The lettercol of MS TREE #20 was almost like DC's VIGILANTE, with more comments on the pros and cons of vigilantism and the death penalty than on the plot, characterization, or artwork. But I'm not really complaining, controversy over #17's ending was inevitable, and, I assume, deliberately encouraged.

I was not really *shocked* by "The Tree Treatment" Fictional private eyes from Mike Hammer to Thomas Magnum have taken the law into their own hands and executed villains, and as J Alexander Hall noted, it was in character. That is not to say that the story didn't work for me, it did. I was not surprised, but I was thrilled, engrossed, excited, and interested, and the ending did have a strong emotional impact.

Robert T Jeschonek's letter raised several questions that I feel compelled to answer as best I can. I am no expert on psychiatry, but I did work as a nursing assistant on a psych ward for over two years, so at least I am not totally ignorant of the subject. I am not trying to change anyone's mind, merely expressing my own opinions.

Most psychiatrists I've known were hard-liners on crime, and had no faith in the concept of "rehabilitation." That sounds like a contradiction, but not really. Most psych patients are not violent, dangerous, or even dishonest; and most criminals are not mentally ill. Yes, in many cases, "mentally ill individuals were treated and made into productive members of society once more," but there is a difference between a person who needed therapy to cope with depression, anxiety, addiction, or whatever, and a person who murders, rapes, and robs innocent victims. Most criminals are anti-social personalities, informally called "psychopaths" — basically, a person without a conscience. The consensus seems to be that conscience must be instilled in early childhood, or it never will be. Therefore, an adult or adolescent criminal cannot be "cured."

Even if rehabilitation were feasible, I question whether it would be worth it. It seems unfair for a murderer to receive a second chance when his victim will never receive another chance to do anything, and it also seems unfair for law-abiding citizens to have to work and pay taxes to support a killer in prison or a state hospital. In our reluctance to punish the guilty, we are, in effect, punishing the innocent. The benefits (if any) of reforming a killer are outweighed by the risk — the danger of innocent people being murdered by the released criminal.

Two objections to the death penalty, cited by Jeschonek, are mutually exclusive. (1) killing a killer is not justified, because two wrongs don't make a right, and (2) executing a killer cannot be justified as long as other criminals (like corrupt politicians and crooked businessmen) escape punishment (i.e. two wrongs do somehow make a right). But the latter argument is irrelevant. Someone else committing a crime — the politician taking a bribe or whatever — does not make the murderer any less guilty. Further, the law recognizes that different crimes warrant different punishment. Bribery, fraud, embezzling, and so on do not involve deadly physical force, and therefore are punishable by less severe penalties than murder. So I disagree with the implication that either we have to execute both the murderer and the corrupt politician, or neither one.

That brings up another point: I think Jeschonek distorts the issue by saying, "Presumably, Michael feels that all harmful members of society should be killed." Come on. All of her "victims" have been murderers; she has never shot someone for shoplifting, jaywalking, littering, or writing a bad check. And her shootings have always been in combat or self-defense, except for #17. When a hit man is shooting at you with a .45 Ingram, you can either shoot back or get blown away. The question of whether your assailant "deserves" rehabilitation or punishment is very much beside the point.

"Who will draw the lines?" Well, that's what legislatures and

courts are for, which is why vigilantism is wrong. But self-defense is not vigilantism. Citizens have a right to be protected from people like Billy Bob, and if the cops and courts cannot or will not provide that protection, then people are justified in protecting themselves.

I also disagree with the description of Michael as "cold and callous." She has shown compassion for innocent victims of crime, and even for "the Wombat" in THE PI's mini-series. She is emotionally tough, but I consider that a good, admirable quality. Ms. Tree doesn't owe anyone an apology for being able to look at a corpse without fainting, any more than, say, Lou Ferrigno or Arnold Schwarzenegger owes me an apology for being able to lift more weight than I can. Michael's toughness is what makes her so appealing. I don't want her to make a habit out of murdering in cold blood, but on the other hand, the day she becomes a goody-goody wimp like DC's and Marvel's super-heroes is the day I stop buying her book.

What makes her any better than the killers she kills? Well, the difference between Michael and Billy Bob (or Muerta) is the difference between a sheep dog and a wolf; the difference between her and Glenn Harwood is the difference between a sheep dog and a sheep. If I ever get mugged, I sure hope it's "callous" Ms. Tree, not "sensitive" Harwood, who comes to my rescue.

Tom Crunkleton, ATLANTA, GA

*Your perceptive, articulate letter is much appreciated, Tom. I am particularly gratified that you took on those readers and commentators who have made the assumption that Ms. Tree is in favor of the death penalty for jaywalkers. Bob Ingersoll, in his THE LAW IS AN ASS column in The Comics Buyer's Guide, has read these stories and come up with the notion that both Ms. Tree and I are in favor of capital punishment. Ms. Tree might be - but I'm most certainly not. I get nervous when the state goes around killing people in my name (executions are always performed in the name of the people of the given state); I also get nervous when a crime is dealt with by committing the same crime again. These are indeed just stories - but they are meant to make you think, and your letter, Tom, is a good example of just how thoughtful MS. TREE readers tend to be.*

Dear Max and Terry,

The latest issue of MS. TREE showed, once again, that this book is one of the best on the market. It is one of only a handful of titles that I look forward to (the others being COYOTE, CEREBUS, FANTASTIC FOUR, SWAMP THING, DALGODA, and maybe LOVE AND ROCKETS), and it is almost always the first comic I read that week (a sure fire test of how good a book really is).

This issue is sure to generate a lot of criticism about the extreme violence, but I think you handled the situation rather well -- taking into consideration just who Michael Tree is. It was certainly a more realistic portrayal than 99% of TV detective/cop shows.

On a lighter note, I just can't figure out your taste in movies and "movie stars", first you say you didn't like "Terms of Endearment" (and you didn't seem too wild about Debra Winger either), and now you say you don't like Cher and you think Margot Kidder would play a good Ms. Tree! Geez! How screwed up can you be? Really though, I think Margot Kidder would make a lousy Ms. Tree -- but I don't have any suggestions about who would make a good one, so I really shouldn't talk.

Well all I have left to say is keep up the good work!

Fred Averick, BROOKLYN, NY

*Neither Terry nor I liked "Terms of Endearment" - there just wasn't enough killing in it! Now, "Rambo" - now there's a movie. Seriously, though, folks, "Terms" was an overblown, hammily acted, disjointed soap opera - however, a terrific half-hour mini-movie about the Jack Nicholson character is buried*



*there. Sometimes I like Debra Winger (as in "Cannery Row") and Cher has turned out to be an okay if overrated actress, but generally speaking the major female stars of the day bore me. Margot Kidder would be an interesting Ms. Tree, but not the ideal one. If Terry and I could choose an actress for "Ms. Tree - The Motion Picture" (and if that ever happens, we probably won't be allowed on the lot, so what's the point?) it would probably be Veronica Hamel ("Hill Street Blues") or Cynthia Sykes (late of "St. Elsewhere") or Vicki Frederick (who appeared in the Robert Aldrich film "All the Marbles"). Also in "All the Marbles" is another potential screen Ms. Tree: Laurene Landon, who played Velda in "I, the Jury", she's a blonde, but nobody's perfect.*

Dear Max and Terry

So far, I've enjoyed every issue of MS. TREE from 1 to 20. The reason I'm writing is in response to a letter printed in the SWAK column. The letter was from a Mr. Pearson (I'd put in his first name, but you guys spelled it differently twice!). It seems that Mr. Pearson is a little upset from the cold-blooded death of the child molester, issued by Ms. Tree. If you ask my opinion, I agree with Ms. Tree and support her actions. Before I go on, let me get one thing straight: I am not a cold-blooded maniac who goes around issuing judgment around on other people, and I don't carry the law out to those the government has missed. I just have sympathy for Ms. Tree and her cause; you see, there are two points, maybe overlooked, and maybe not, that have to be considered. 1. If you were in the same situation as Ms. Tree, how would you feel? For instance, Mr. Pearson, if someone really close to you in your family was kidnapped and was subject to horrible things, I know you, like any other human, would want to take revenge. You would wish you could do something to get your loved one back, and to prevent this from happening to others. Well, Ms. Tree had the ability and used it to keep the vermin from spreading. 2. If scum like this knows that people are chasing after him, her, and wish to take revenge, maybe the scum will stop? In other words, by eliminating one child molester, others will find out that they are no longer being tolerated (not such a good word) and instead, are being exterminated (much better word).

The subject of violence, too much/too little, is or has been a recent topic in many comics (i.e., GRIMJACK, VIGILANTE, JON SABLE, etc.). I'm sorry I had to bring it into yours. Well, what I'm trying to say is that if Ms. Tree or anyone were to go out and kill for good (in their own eyes), that it should be in the fashion of "Death Wish" or the Exterminator (I'm not supporting these people, just hold on). I definitely do not approve of the killing in the VIGILANTE (not now, with the psycho that has taken over Adrian's costume and kills everyone that he sees fit to kill). His justice is sickening and perverted. In other words, perverted, deranged, mutants, like the man in issue #17, sometimes deserve to be put out of commission, and if someone like Ms. Tree (that someone is someone with a sane idea and picture of what they're doing, someone who has the power to change something and is not afraid to use it), then that someone should do something about it. I know you don't agree with my views, Mr. Pearson. I just think both sides of the story should get equal airtime and consideration (one question: what do you think of pages 6 and 7 in chapter 6, issue #20?).

And now for something completely different. One thing I enjoy most about MS. TREE, is or are the stories that take more than one issue to complete. A lot of other comics don't use multi-issue stories as effectively, or at all. It's the suspense at the end of each issue that keeps me coming back. Another thing, the cover of #20 was fantastic. Last year, if you guys are going to keep doing your books in black, white, and one color, do you think you could switch that one color more often? I'm getting sick of brown. How about blue, green, or red?

Take care, and keep up the great work.

Chris Romano, PACIFIC PALISADES, CA

*Chris, some readers have failed to pick up on what you easily grasped, namely that Ms. Tree was personally involved in "Runaway" - she isn't a vigilante going out to wipe out any and all "baddies." Rather, she was a mother whose son narrowly escaped a dreadful fate, and, being who she is, she dealt with the person responsible for endangering her boy in her own special way. As for the continued stories, we're glad our readership enjoys them, but we do have the problem of scaring off new readers because they can't find an easy place to come aboard. For that reason, we'll be doing a number of*

*two-issue continuities in the months ahead, although the stories will (as usual) interlock. I agree with you about the cover of #20 - Terry's covers just get better and better. You'll also be seeing us using red and blue as well as brown for our "extra" tone. After initially choosing red and blue to alternate between, we stumbled upon sepia (you know - "brown") and fell in love with it - and maybe overused it at first.*

Dear Mr. Collins and Mr. Beatty

When THE COMICS BUYERS GUIDE has their yearly awards for the best comics cover of the year, I'll bet that everyone who doesn't vote for the X-MEN or THE TEEN TITANS will vote for the cover of MS. TREE #20. That fire-on-midnight cover was one of the most appealing I've seen on a comic book in months, and I hope this leads to further experiments with the graphic designs of MS. TREE covers.

The story was as so great, although I was rather annoyed by the gratuitous violence on pages 5, 6, and 7. Geez, I read MS. TREE for the great detective stories, the mystery, and the style. I could care less if Ms. Tree racks up a 700-man body-count every issue. I know that MS. TREE is a very cool and competent woman in action. When her action scenes are limited to RAMBO style shoot-em-ups, it looks well, rather silly. You can only carry violence so far before it becomes laughable and loses its dramatic intention. Remember the sword duel with the Black Knight in MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL? ('It's only a flesh wound!') Too much exaggerated violence becomes a cop-out after awhile. It looks like the writer couldn't come up with anything, so he decided to kill a whole bunch of people and pass it off as drama. I have too much respect for Max Collins to see him fall into this too common comics trap. Mega-violence, whether it comes from BATMAN, THE WOLVERINE, JAMES BOND, DIRTY HARRY, or MS. TREE becomes a literary dead end.

I rather liked the introduction of 'Little Jesus,' and I was sorry to see him killed so soon. Comic books stand or fall because of really good villains. Everytime MS. TREE gets a really good villain, he is almost immediately killed. It would be nice to see a reoccurring villain in MS. TREE (maybe a female hitter, who is the direct opposite of MS. TREE) that could be brought back occasionally.

One final note (of a more personal nature):

In the letter column of issue #20 you printed another fine letter by T.M. Maple. However, there was a comment made to the effect that now that T.M. sent you a letter, you've "arrived."

Give me a break.

In several comics I've read lately (THUNDER BUNNY AND one other I can't readily recall), I've seen the comment that a letter column just ain't a letter column unless T.M. Maple wrote in. I believe this is an insult (and I'm sure T.M. would agree) to all those who faithfully sit down and write to comics, that T.M.'s letters are the only "official" letters by which fan mail is measured.

I am not the ultimate fan voice. T.M. or Dale Coe or Susan M. Murrie or any of the other semi-regular letterhacks are not the voices that make or break a comic. I stopped printing my full address on letters because I was tired of getting hate mail from readers who said "Who made you spokesman for us?" I would read my letter as printed and see that I nowhere claimed to be a spokesman, but many comic editors implied that I was.

I enjoy seeing my letters in print as much as the next guy. I hope that you don't interpret this as a move to bad-mouth T.M. or any other letterhack, but the fact remains that depending on any single letter hack for feedback hardly gives a creator a good sample audience. I'm sure many people that would like to write simply sit back and say "forget it, I'll just let T.M. Maple say it for me."

T. E. Pouncey, WICHITA, KANSAS

*The action scene in MS. TREE #20 was meant to be somewhat humorous - blackly humorous, that is. And it was a scene we built to, over many issues, and nothing we plan to make a habit of (issue #21, as you've seen, has some similar violence, but the issue you're holding in your hands could hardly be more un-"Rambo"-like, could it?) We're glad you liked Little Jesus, hell, who knows - maybe he'll rise again. We kill off interesting (and sympathetic) characters because that is (a) part and parcel of Ms. Tree's violent world, and (2) it keeps you guys on your toes. As for our commenting that receiving a letter from T.M. Maple meant we'd "arrived," that was intended to be tongue in cheek. Our letters page - and the many and varied*

*Continued on page 29*



**New Hope: Where dreams begin...**  
**To Die**



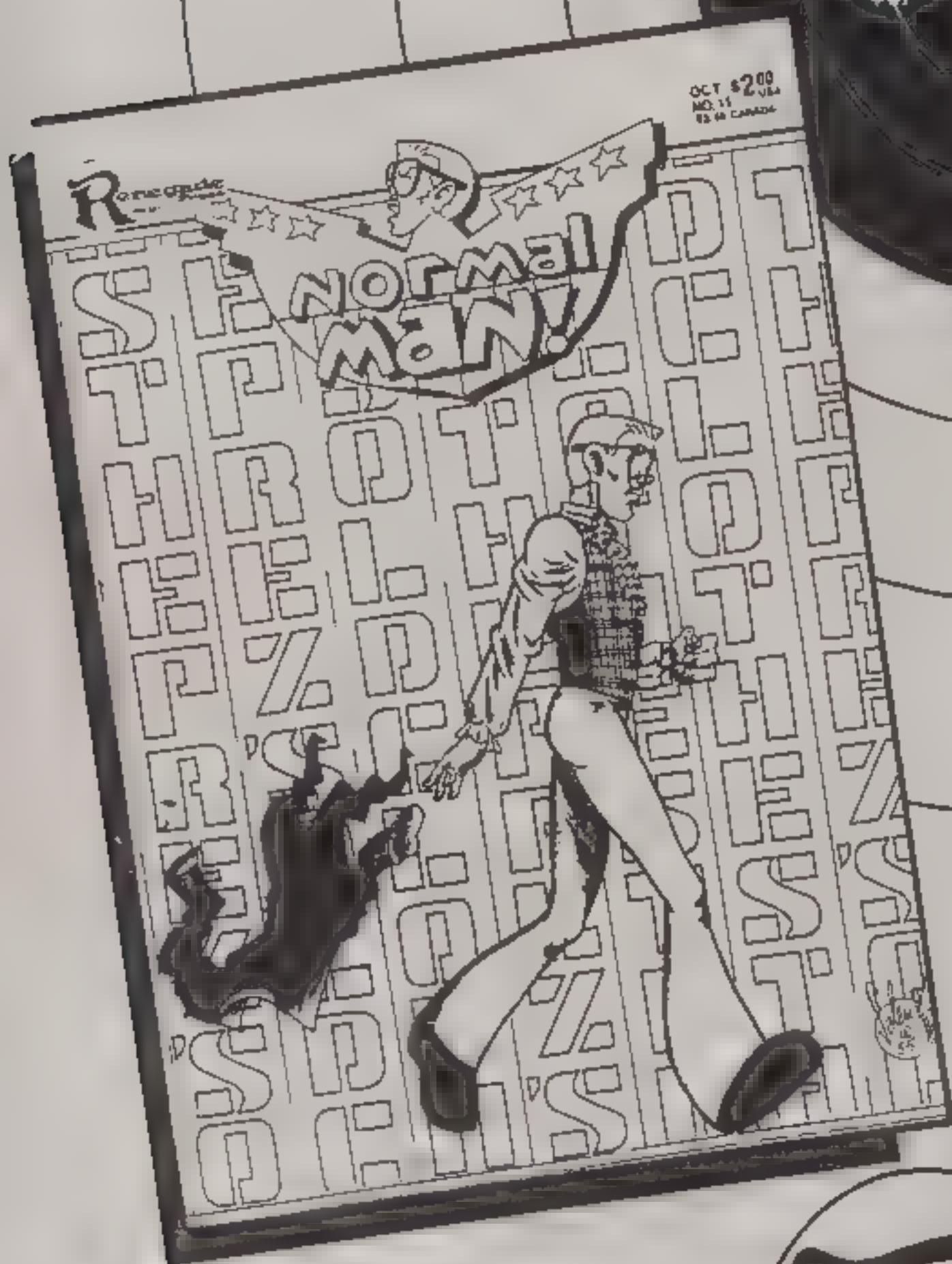
**WOLVERINE**

The Adventures of Wolverine MacAlistaire

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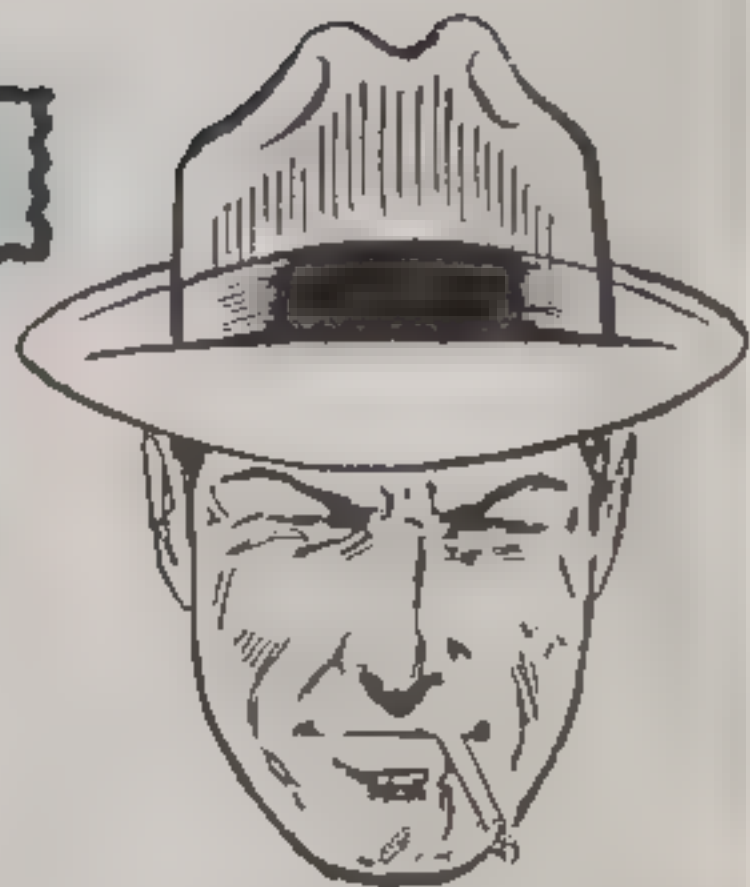
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# THE MIKE MIST

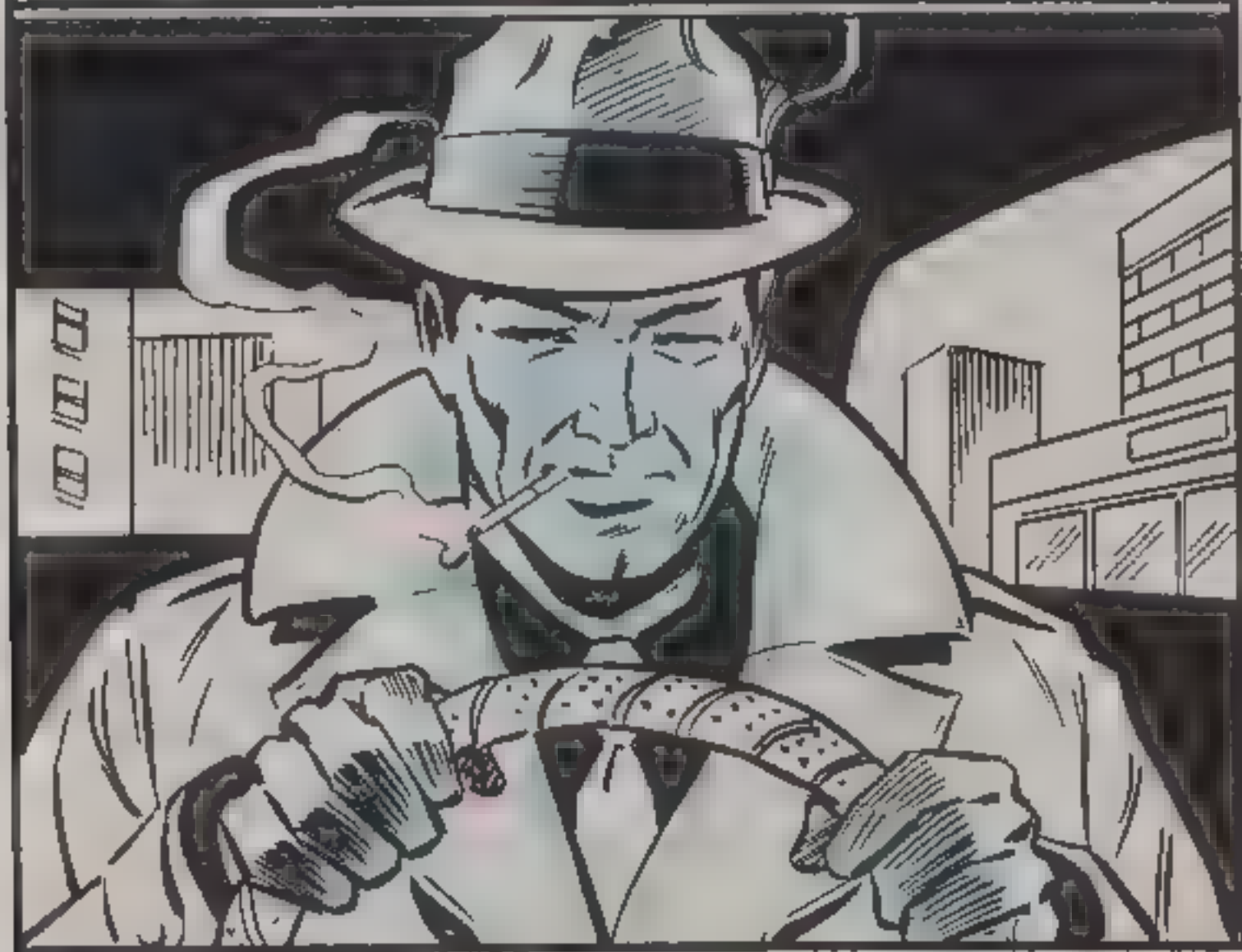
MINUTE MYSTERIES

© 1985 MAX COLLINS and TERRY BEATTY

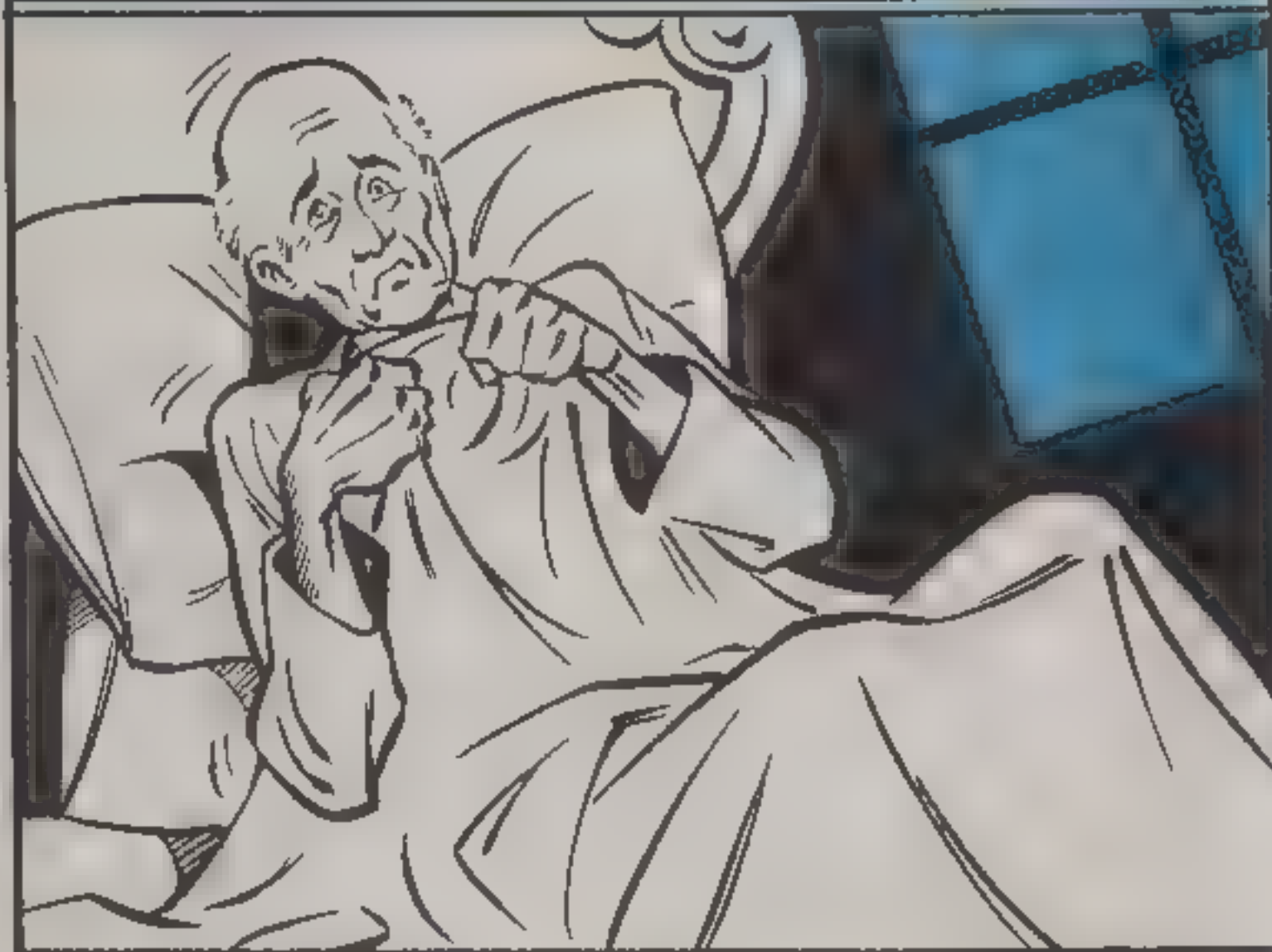


## "WOMAN in WHITE"

MILLIONAIRE H.T. LEAW WAS A CLIENT OF LONGSTANDING — HIS CALL OF HELP CAUSED ME NO GREAT ALARM —



HE WAS A PARANOID OLD COOT — A HYPOCHONDRIAC WHO WAS FEARFUL ONE OF HIS SEVERAL HEIRS WOULD DO HIM IN —



OH! YOU STARTLED ME! YOU MUST BE MR. LEAW'S SECURITY MAN —



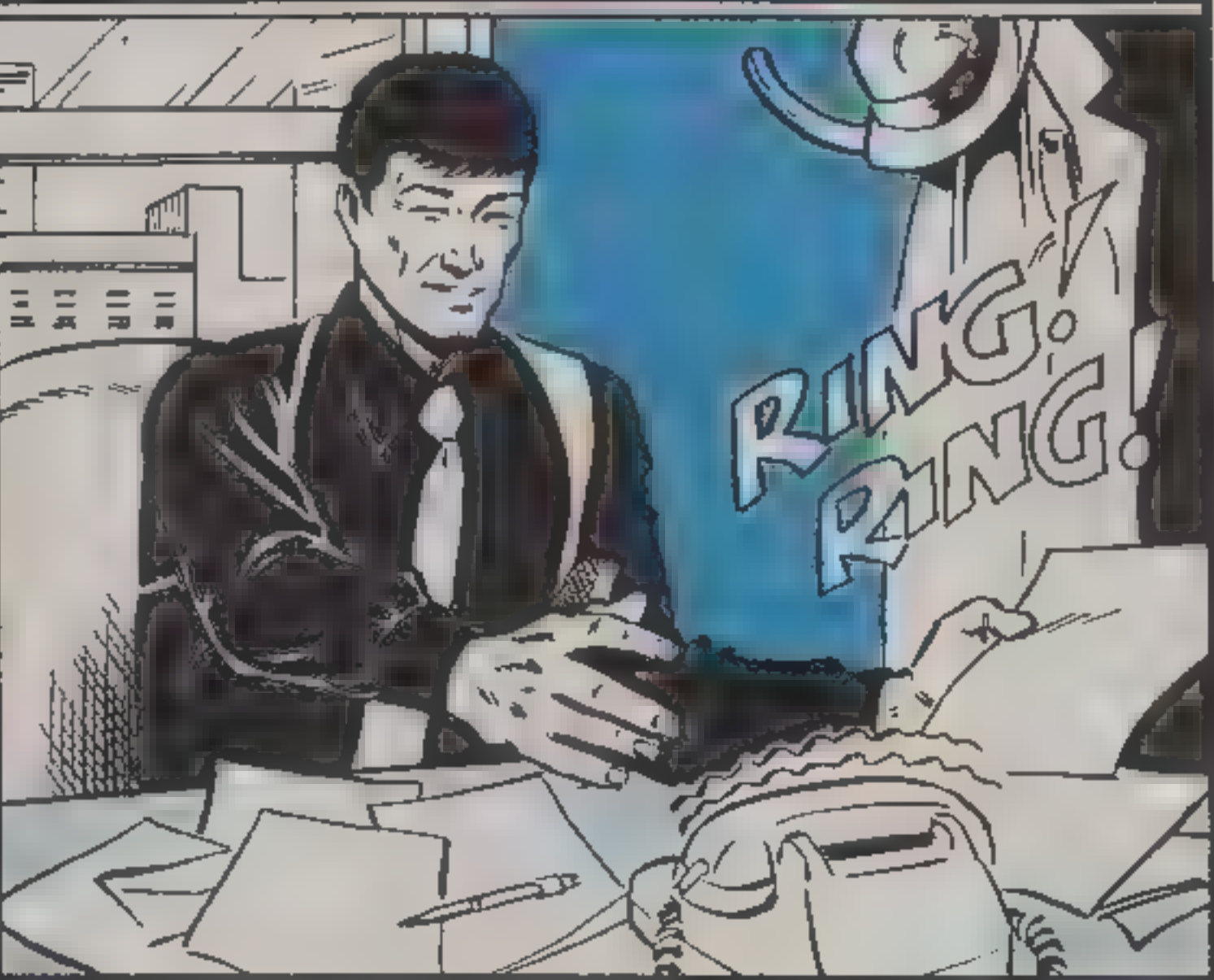
YES. AND YOU'RE...?

NURSE BENCHLY. HE JUST RANG FOR ME...

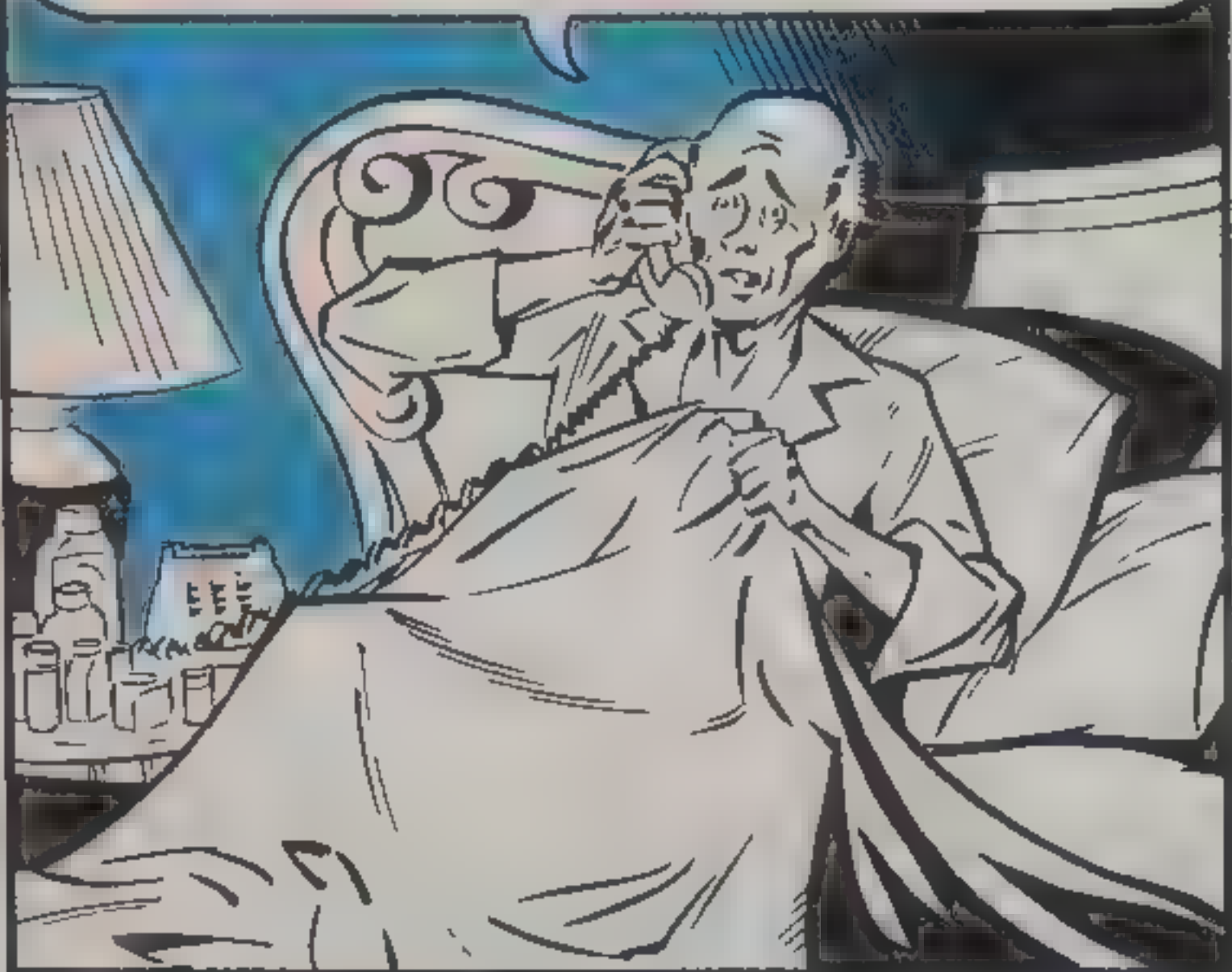




EVERY P. I. HAS TO PUT UP WITH PAPERWORK — BUT, THANKFULLY, THE PHONE OFTEN **RESCUES** YOU —



MIKE — GET OVER HERE **QUICKLY** — I'M AFRAID SOMEONE'S **BREAKING IN** — I'M ALONE HERE WITH MY **NURSE** —



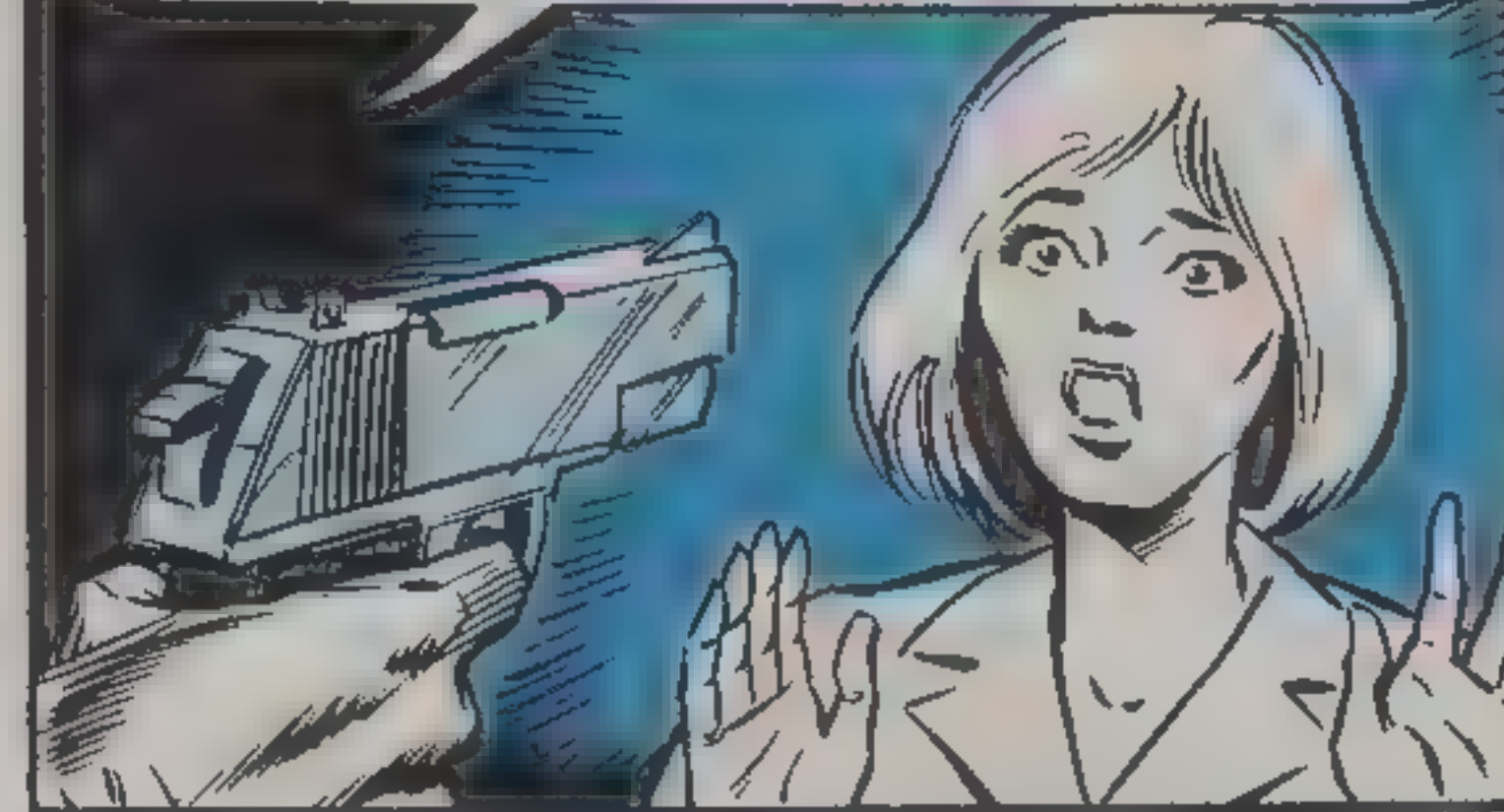
I'D INSTALLED THE **SECURITY** SYSTEM IN HIS **TOWNHOUSE** MYSELF — AND HAD A **KEY** —



OH DEAR. I'M AFRAID HE'S **DEAD** —



SO ARE YOU, IF YOU DON'T PUT UP YOUR HANDS. NOW, WHERE IS THE **REAL** **NURSE** ?



THE "NURSE" WAS A KILLER. HIRED BY AN IMPATIENT HEIR; NO TRUE NURSE WOULD TAKE A PULSE HOLDING THUMB TO INNER WRIST — THERE'S A STRONG PULSE IN THE HUMAN THUMB.



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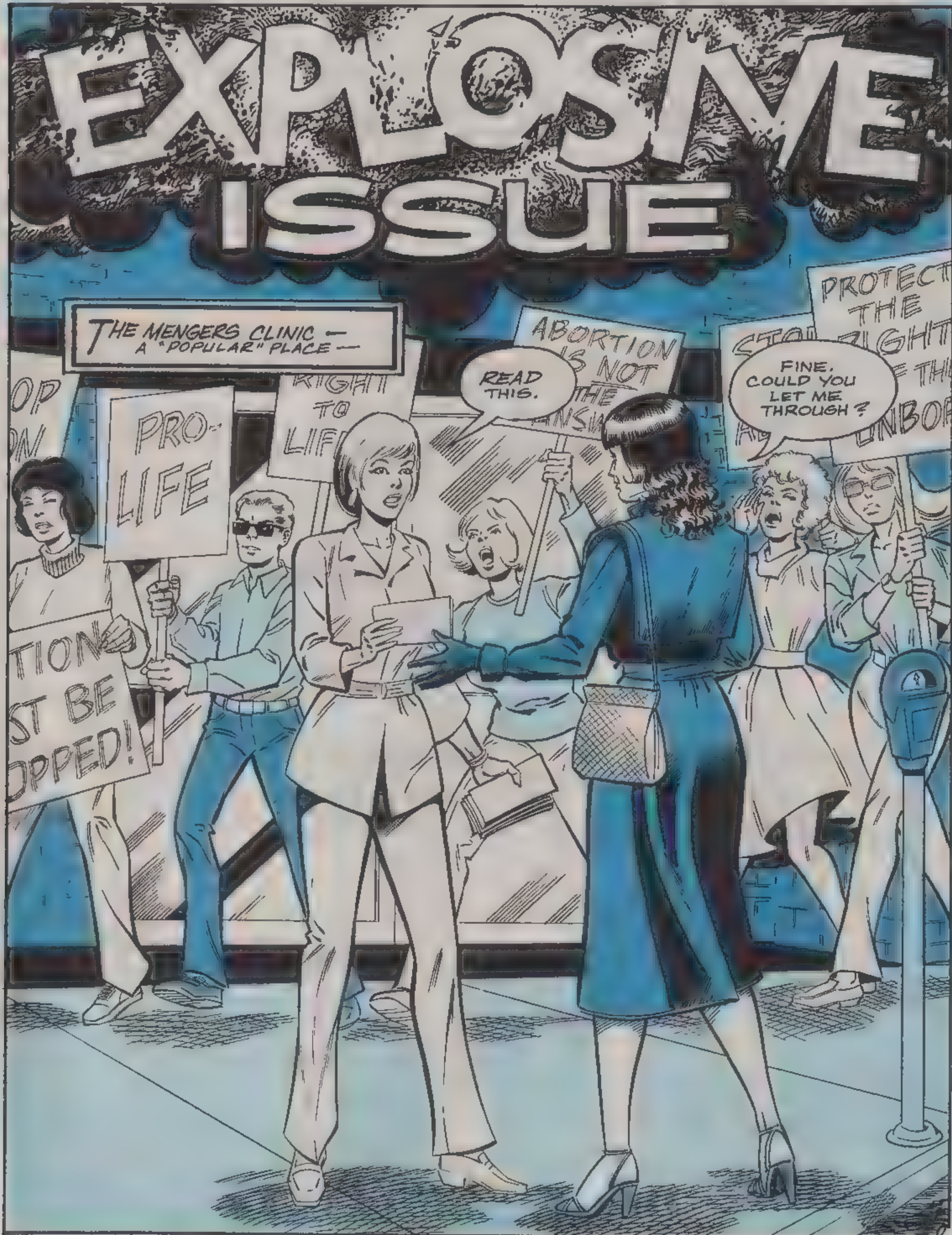


# Ms. TREE "Right to Die"

© 1985

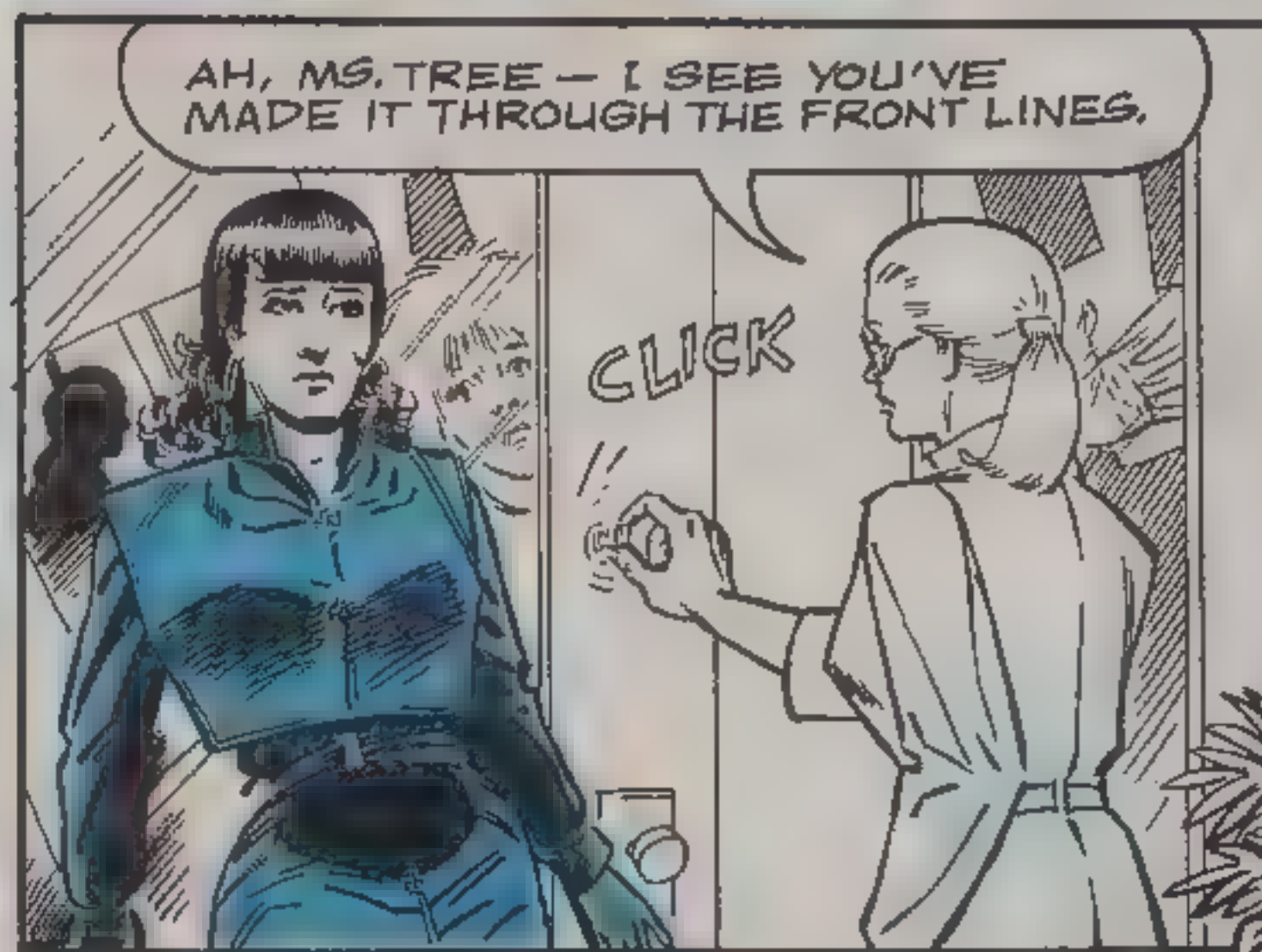
## Chapter Two

by Max Collins and Terry Beatty

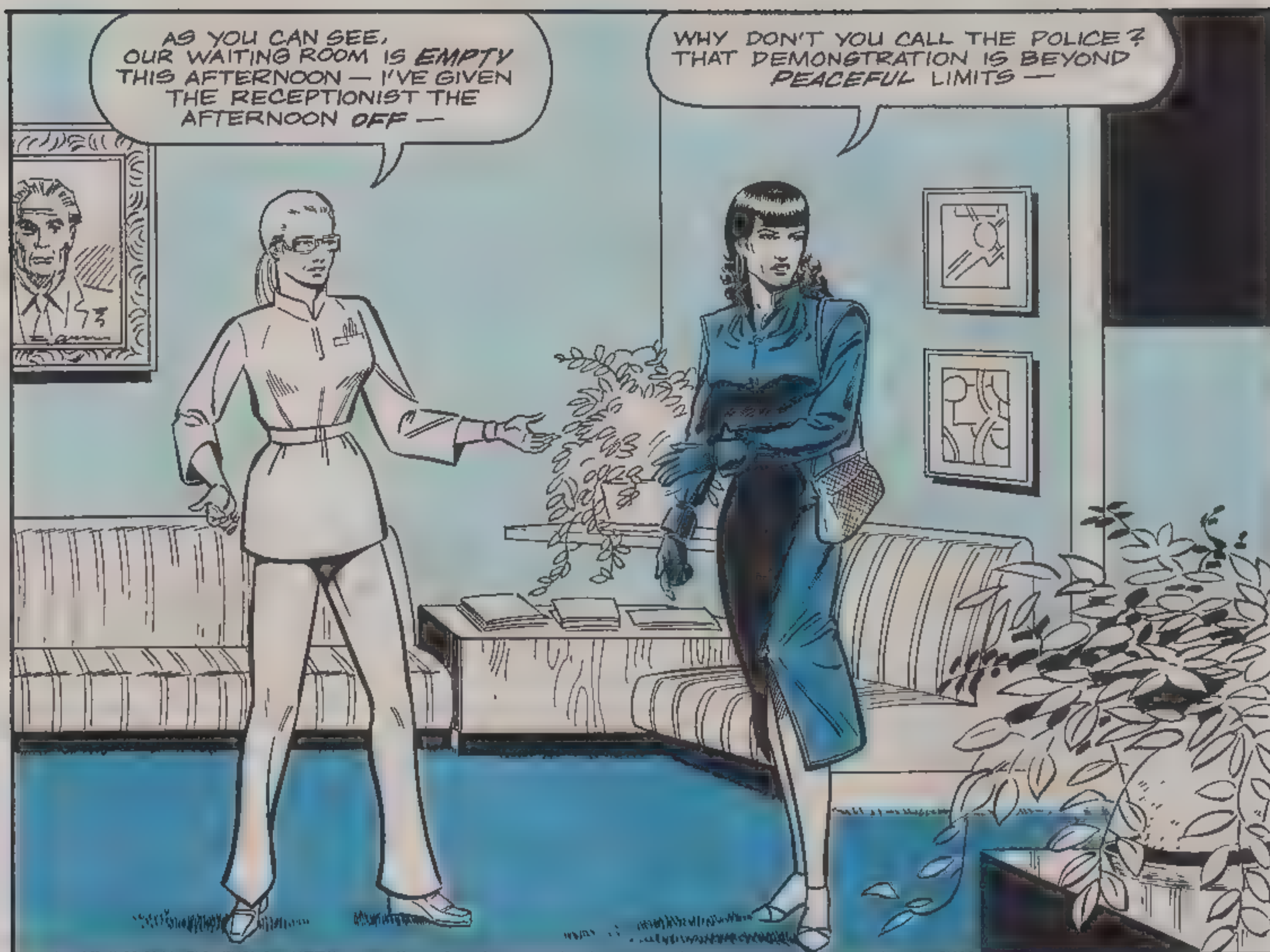


ART ASSIST & LETTERING: GARY KATO







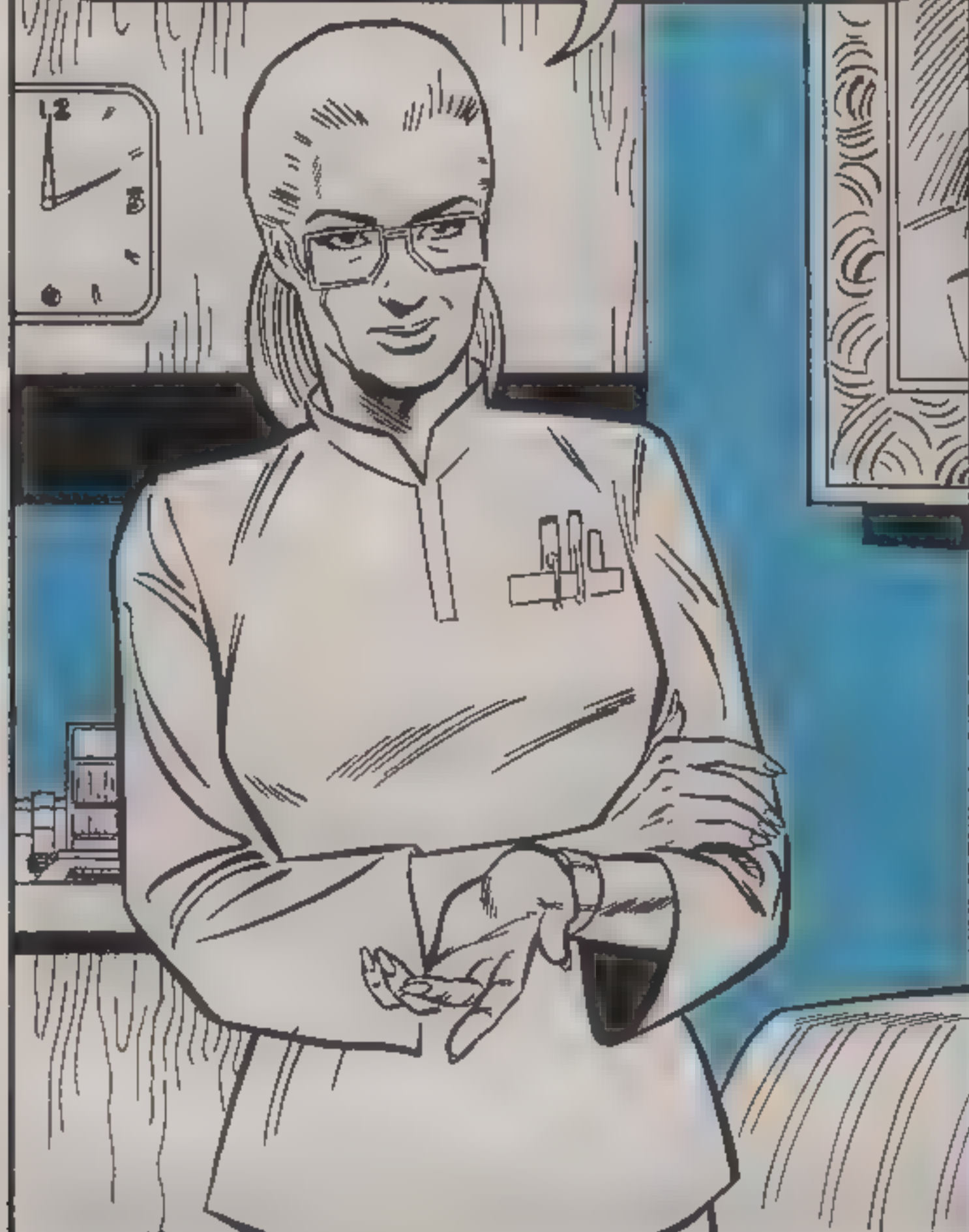


AS YOU CAN SEE,  
OUR WAITING ROOM IS *EMPTY*  
THIS AFTERNOON — I'VE GIVEN  
THE RECEPTIONIST THE  
AFTERNOON *OFF* —

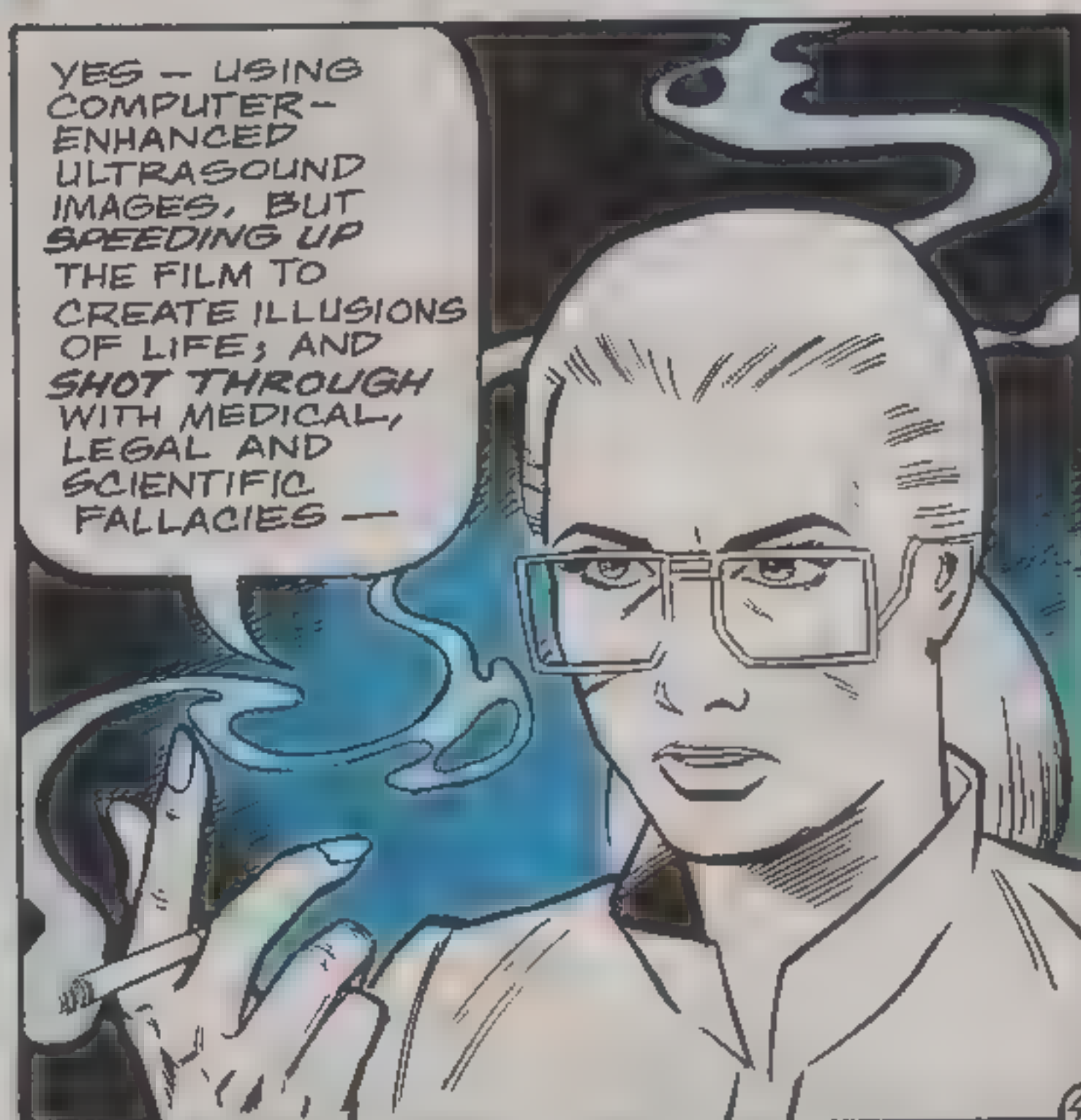
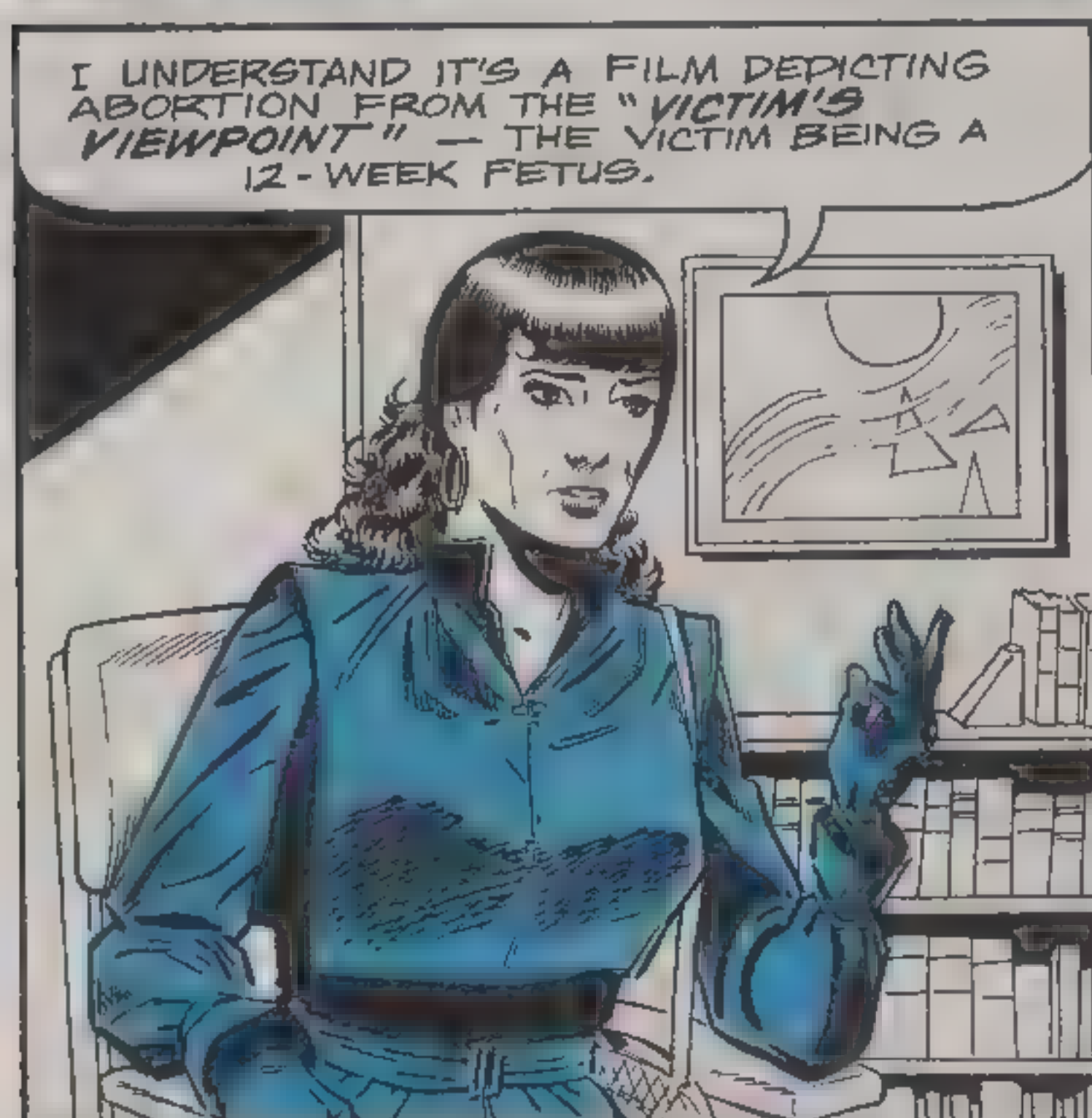
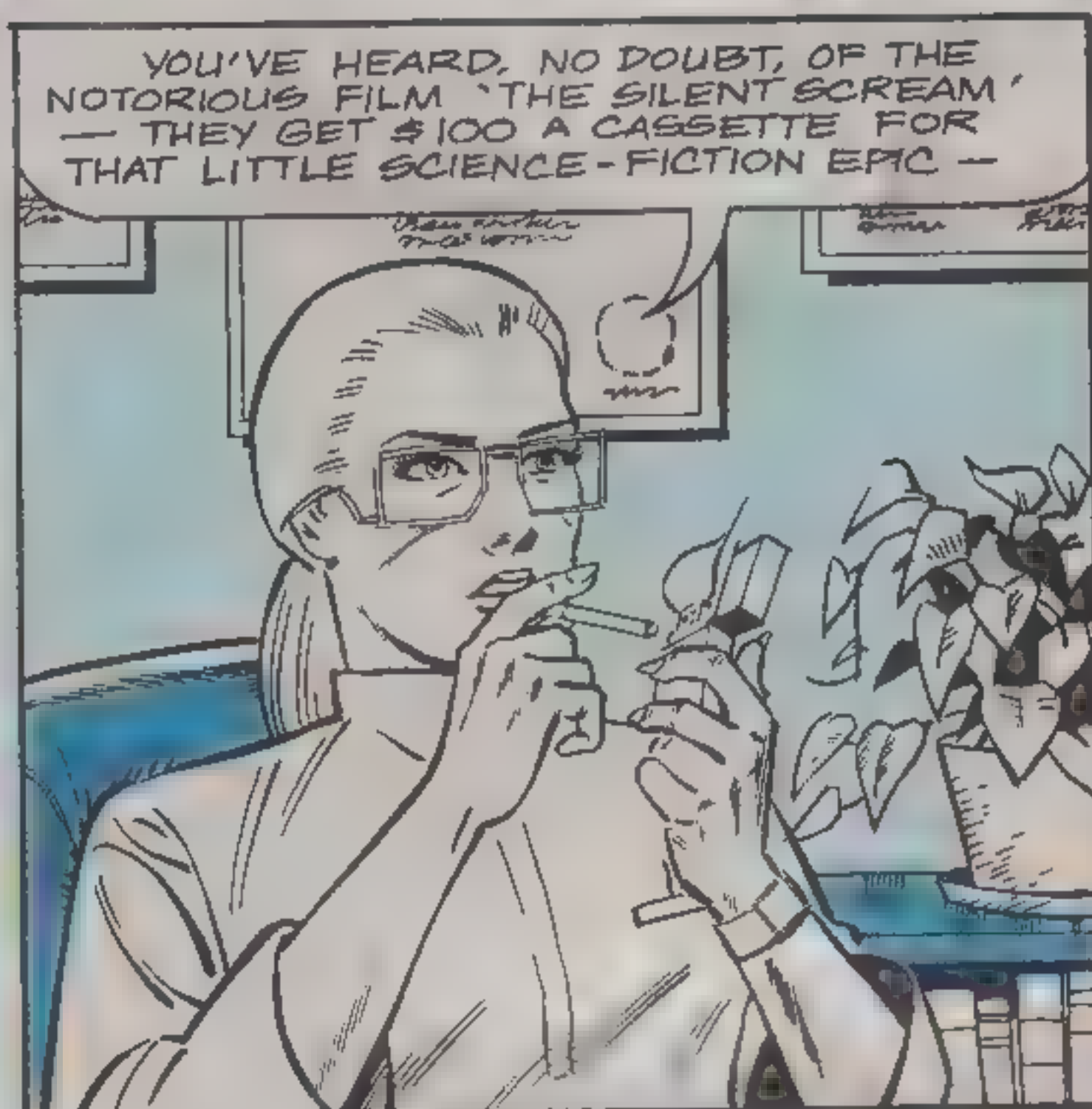
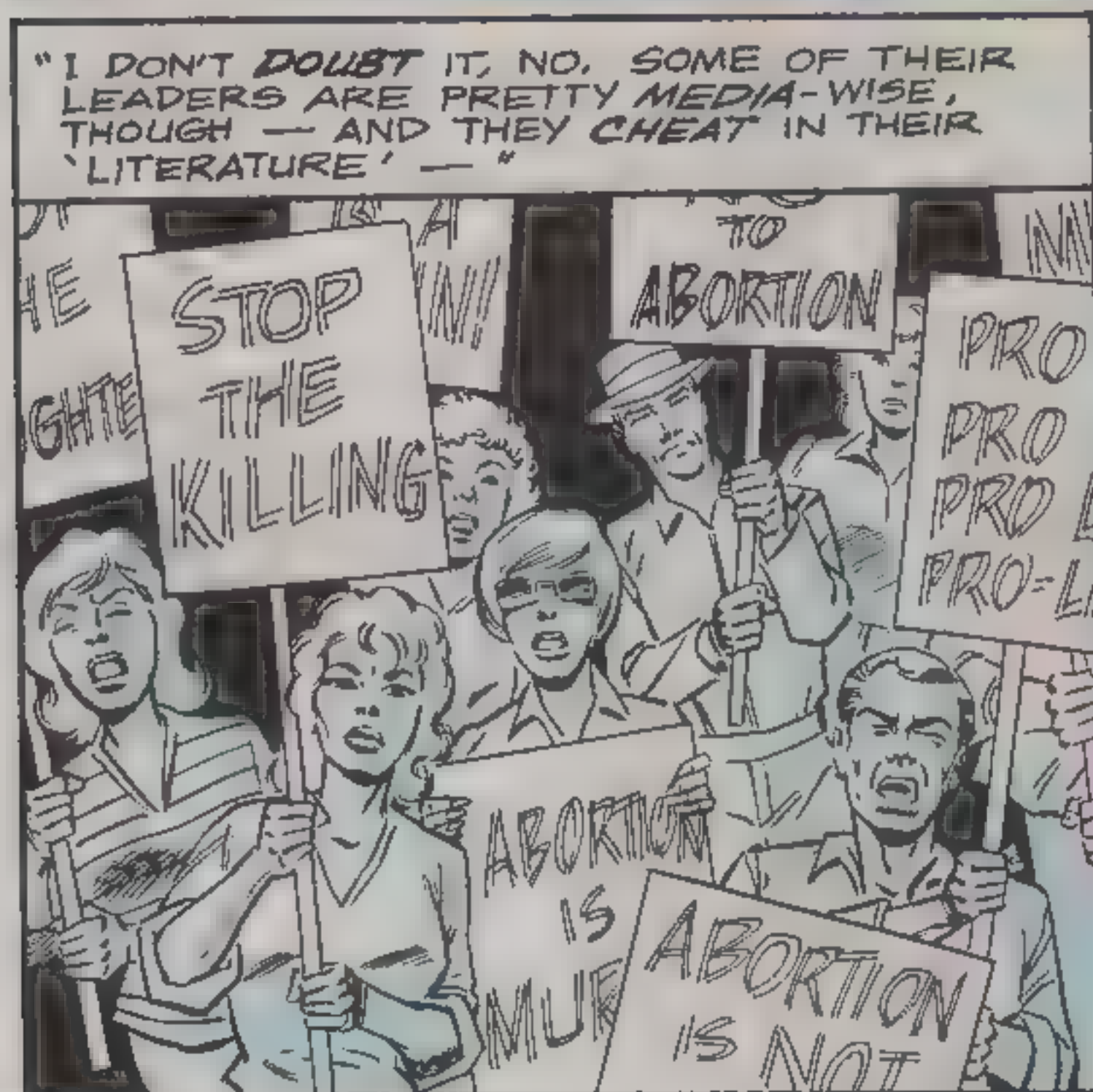
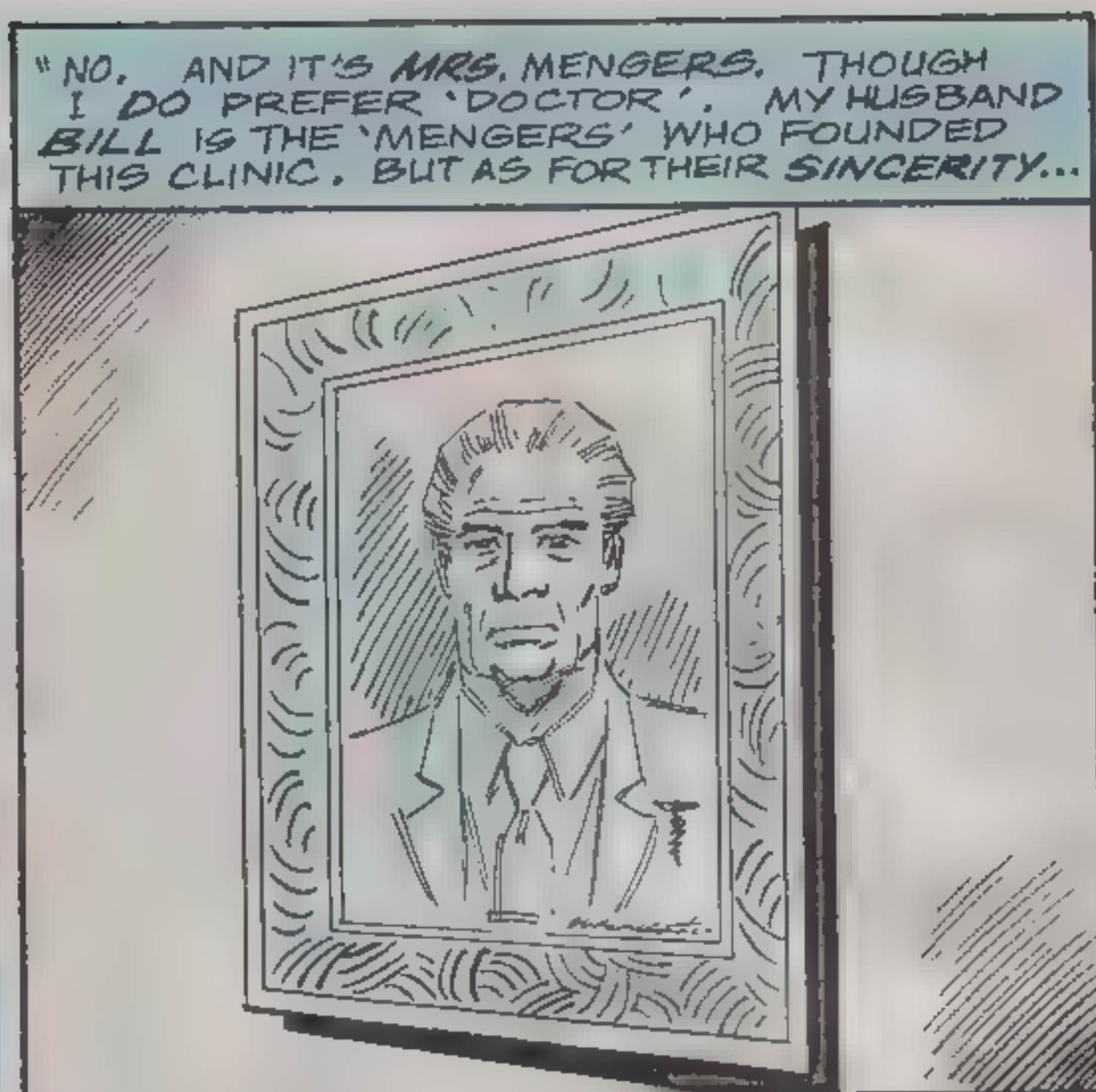
WHY DON'T YOU CALL THE POLICE?  
THAT DEMONSTRATION IS BEYOND  
*PEACEFUL LIMITS* —

THAT'S *EXACTLY* THE SORT OF PUBLICITY  
*F.B.T.U.S.* WOULD *RELISH* — THEIR  
CAUSE WOULD BE SPLASHED ON THE  
FRONT PAGE, GLOW FORTH FROM THE  
SIX O'CLOCK NEWS...

I DON'T WANT TO MAKE *MARTYRS* OUT  
OF THEM. THEY ANNOUNCE THEIR  
DEMONSTRATIONS TO THE PRESS, OBTAIN  
THE PROPER PERMITS — SO IT GETS BACK  
TO ME. I CAN PLAN AROUND THEIR  
LITTLE CHARADES.



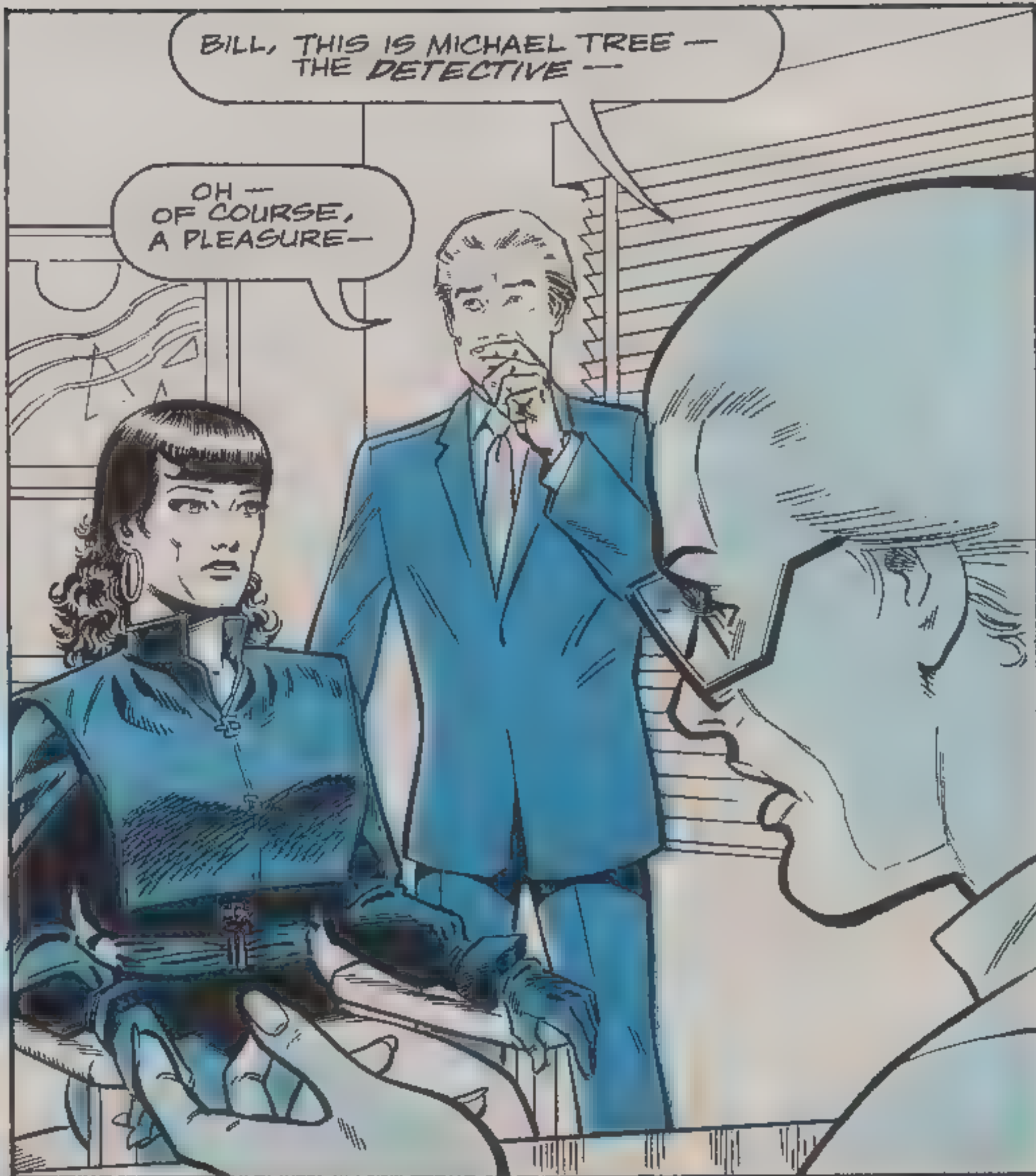








WELL,  
HERE I AM...  
UH, OH. ~~SORRY~~ —  
I DIDN'T THINK ANYONE  
WAS HERE THIS  
AFTERNOON...



BILL, THIS IS MICHAEL TREE —  
THE *DETECTIVE* —

OH —  
OF COURSE,  
A PLEASURE —



I'M SURE MY WIFE WILL  
BE OF GREAT HELP TO  
YOU, MS. TREE.  
THERE'S NOTHING TO  
WORRY ABOUT.

OH, BUT  
DR. MENGERS,  
I'M NOT HERE  
TO...



WE'LL TALK  
LATER...  
DEAR.

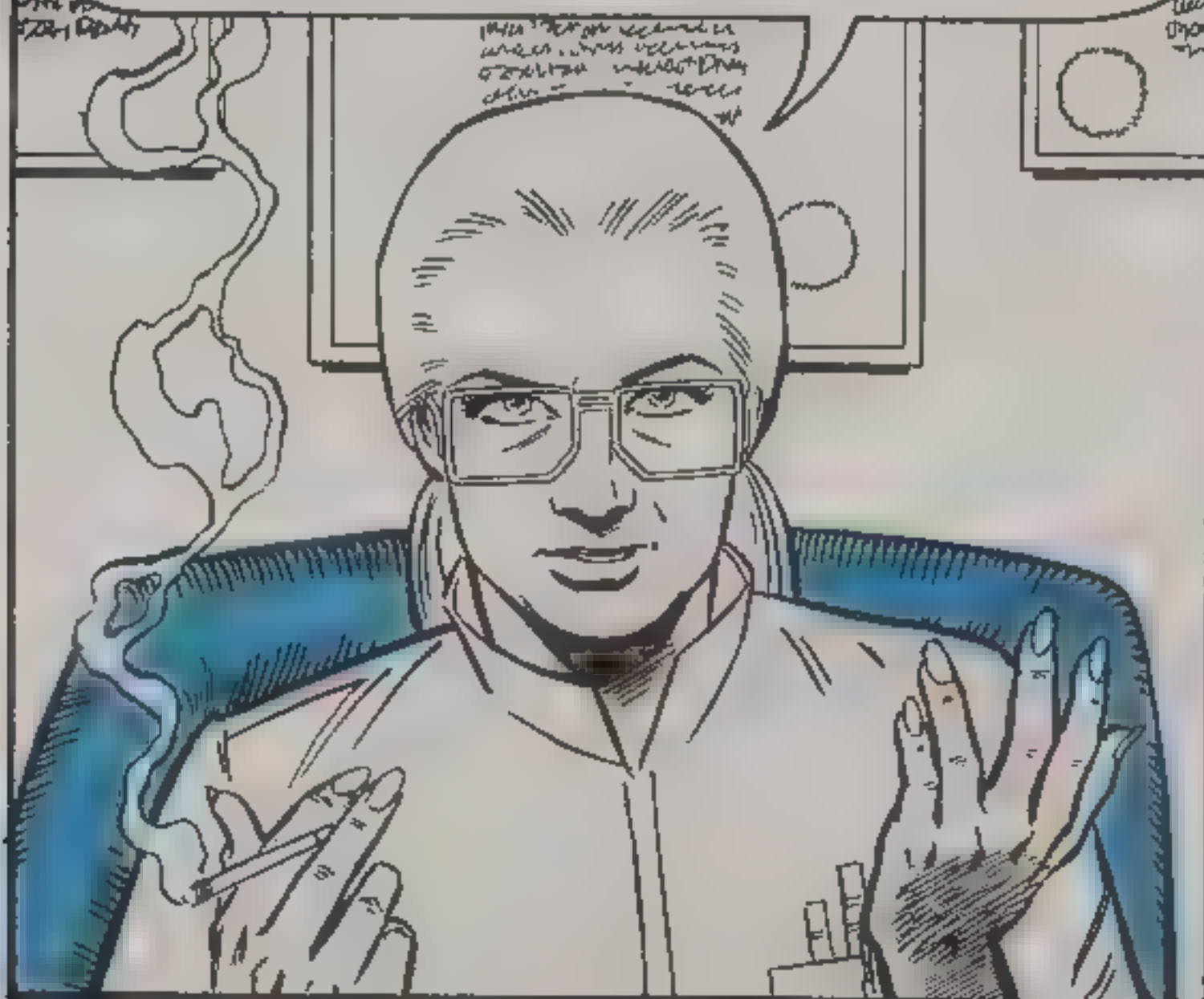


I'M *EMBARRASSED*  
— HE THOUGHT I  
WAS A PATIENT —

I DON'T THINK SO.  
HE'S GETTING  
*FORGETFUL*, IS ALL;  
I MENTIONED  
YOUR HAVING CALLED  
ABOUT THE  
BOMB THREAT...



NOW, TELL ME ABOUT THIS INDIVIDUAL WHO'S THREATENING TO BLOW US UP, AND OUT OF BUSINESS—

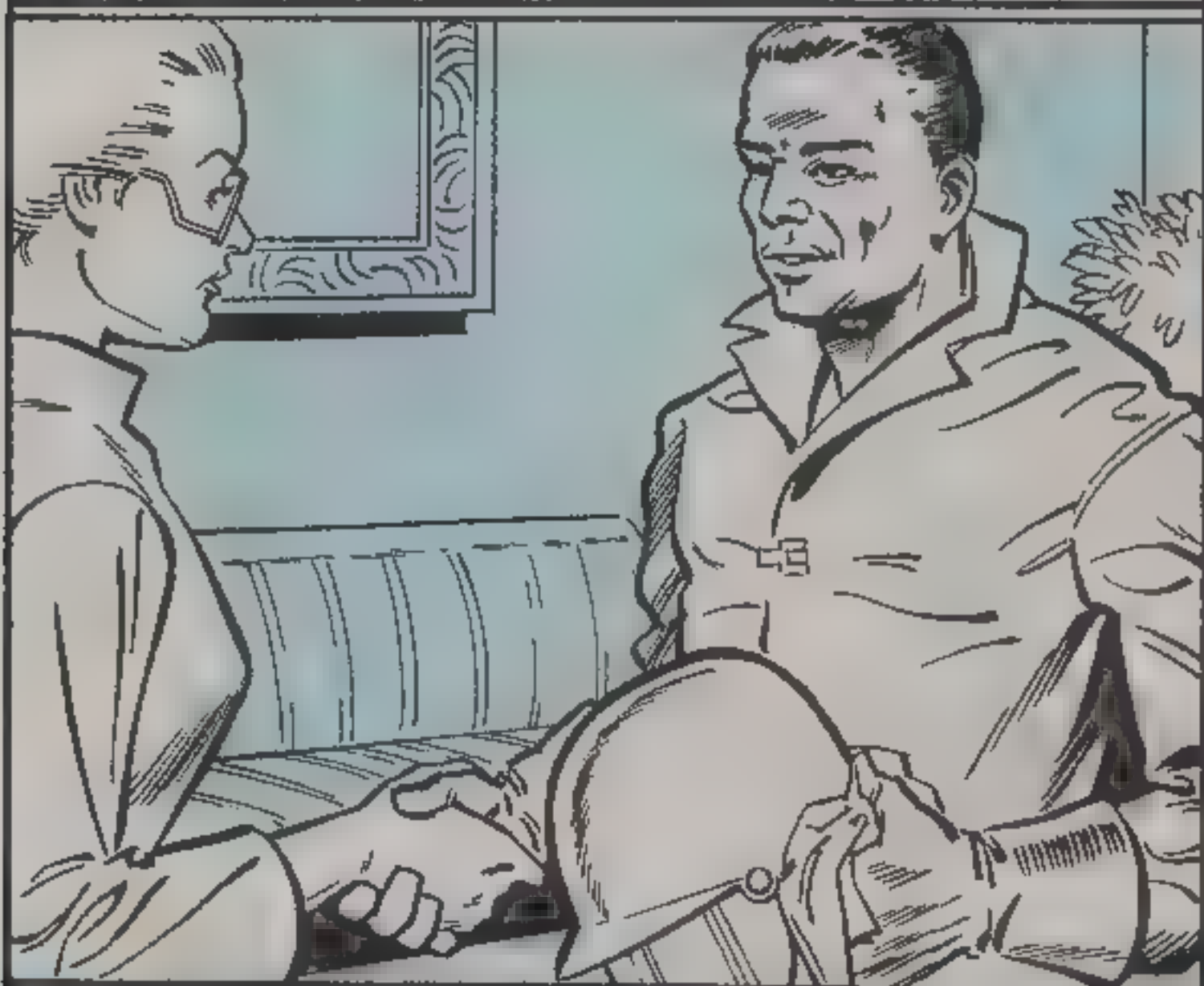


"YOU SEEM TO TAKE THIS IN STRIDE, DOCTOR."

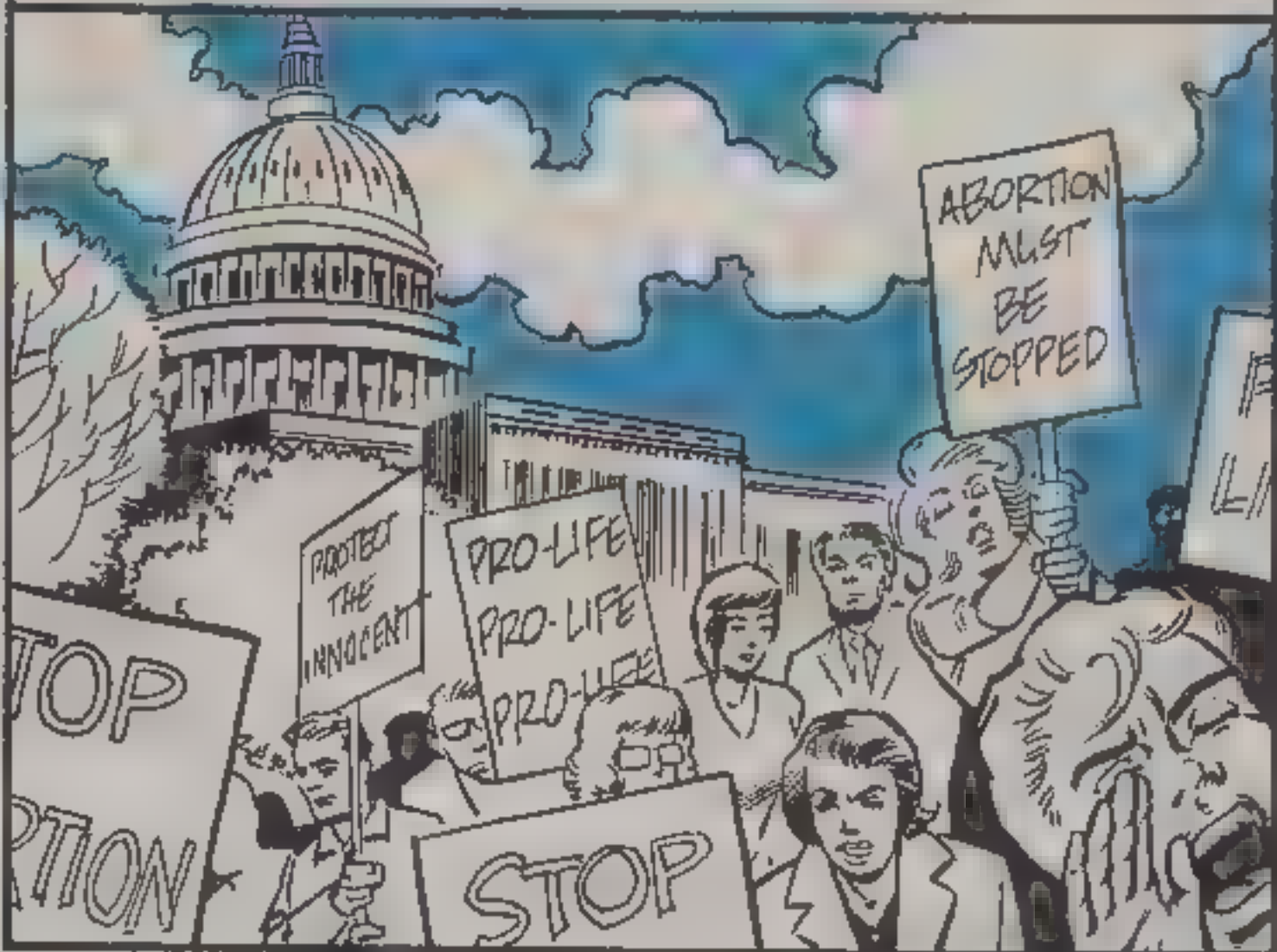
"YOU SAW OUR WELCOMING COMMITTEE— SHOULD VIOLENT PROTEST AGAINST OUR WORK SURPRISE ME?"



"WE'VE HAD TWELVE BOMB SCARES THIS YEAR," DR. MENSERS EXPLAINED. "I KNOW THE BOMB SQUAD BOYS INTIMATELY."

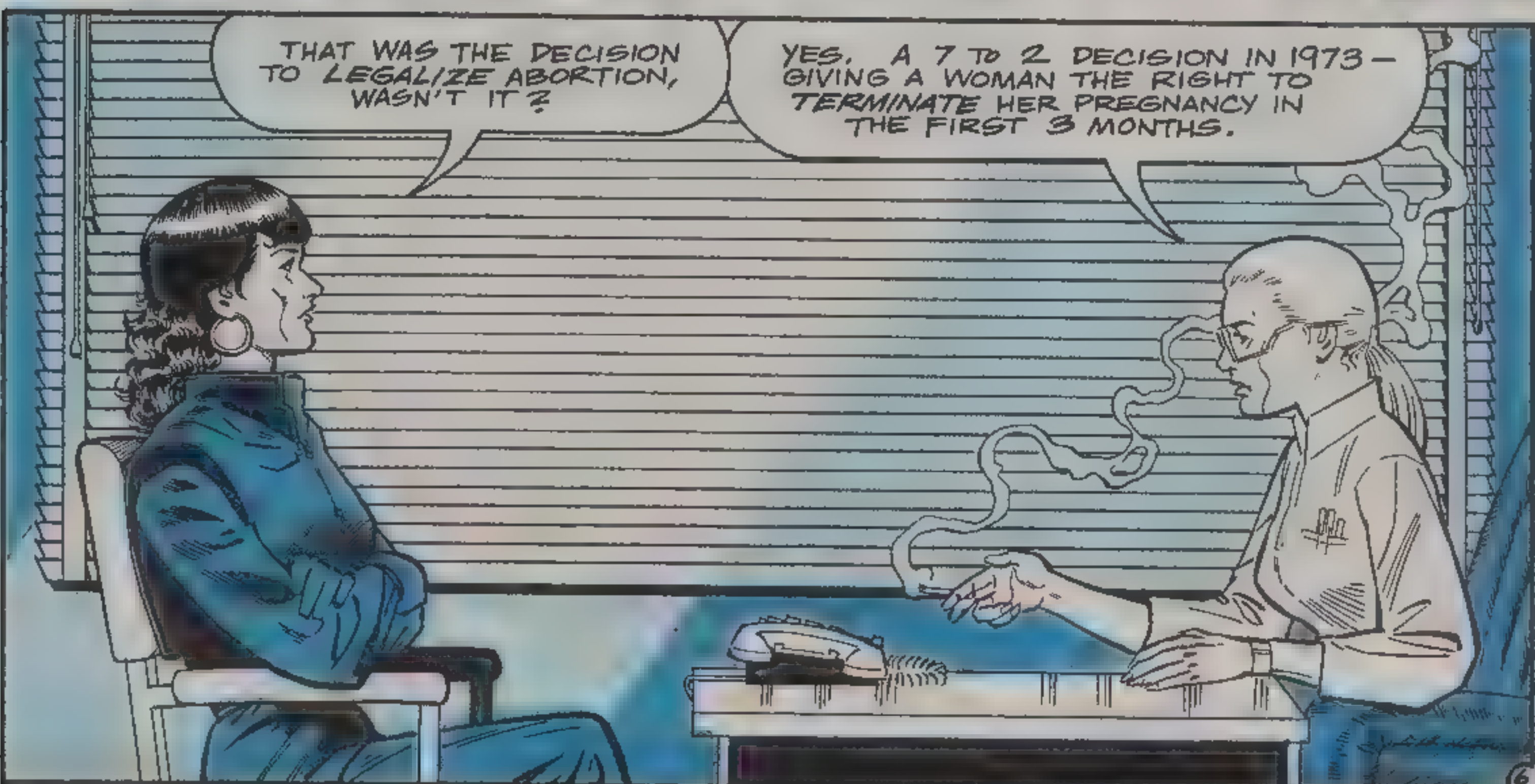


"YOU SEE, MS. TREE, THINGS HAVE HEATED UP ON THE ABORTION FRONT — RALLIES OUTSIDE THE CAPITOL BUILDING, RHETORIC FLYING IN CONGRESS. ALL BECAUSE THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT — AT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST — IS ASKING THE SUPREME COURT TO REPEAL ROE VS. WADE."

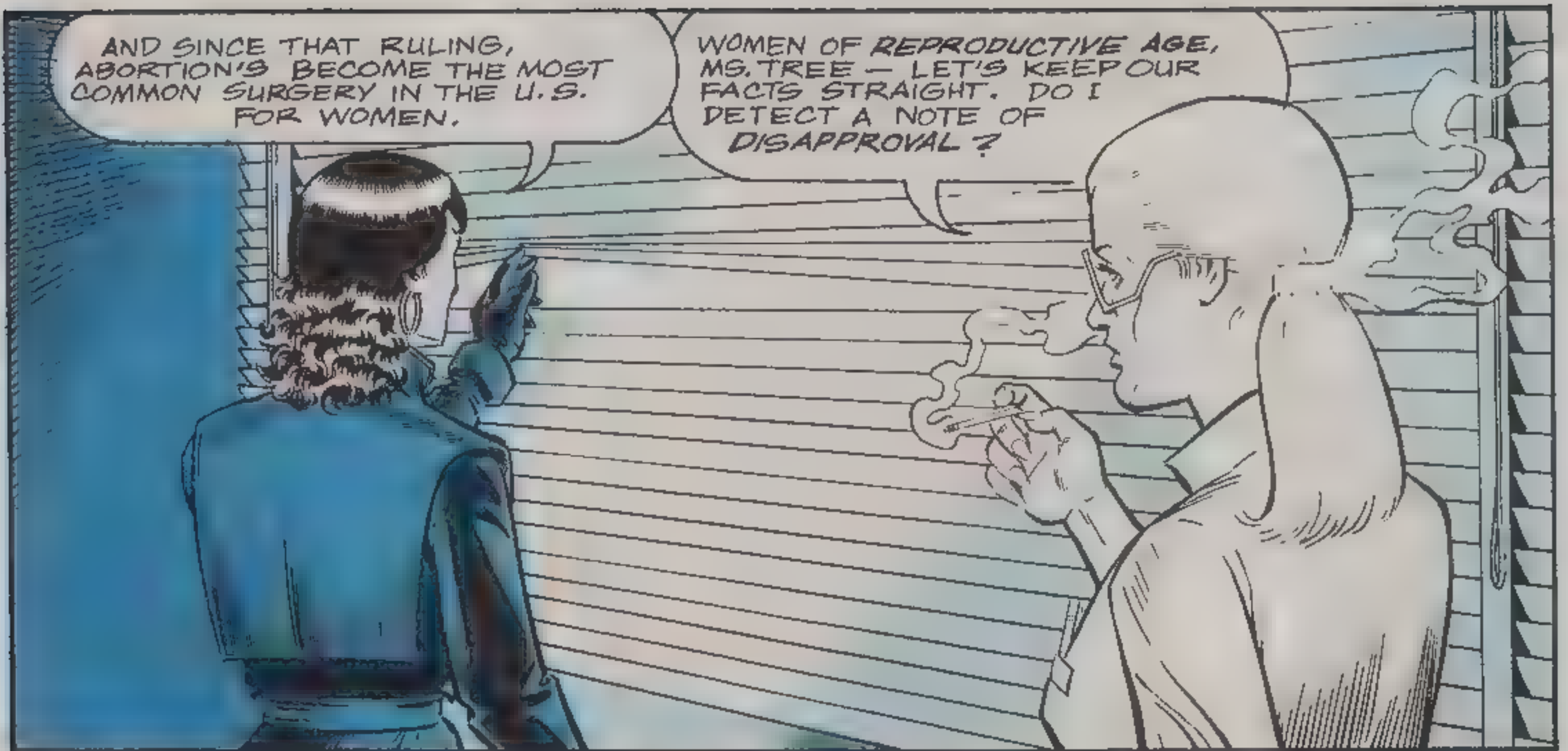


THAT WAS THE DECISION TO LEGALIZE ABORTION, WASN'T IT?

YES. A 7 TO 2 DECISION IN 1973 — GIVING A WOMAN THE RIGHT TO TERMINATE HER PREGNANCY IN THE FIRST 3 MONTHS.

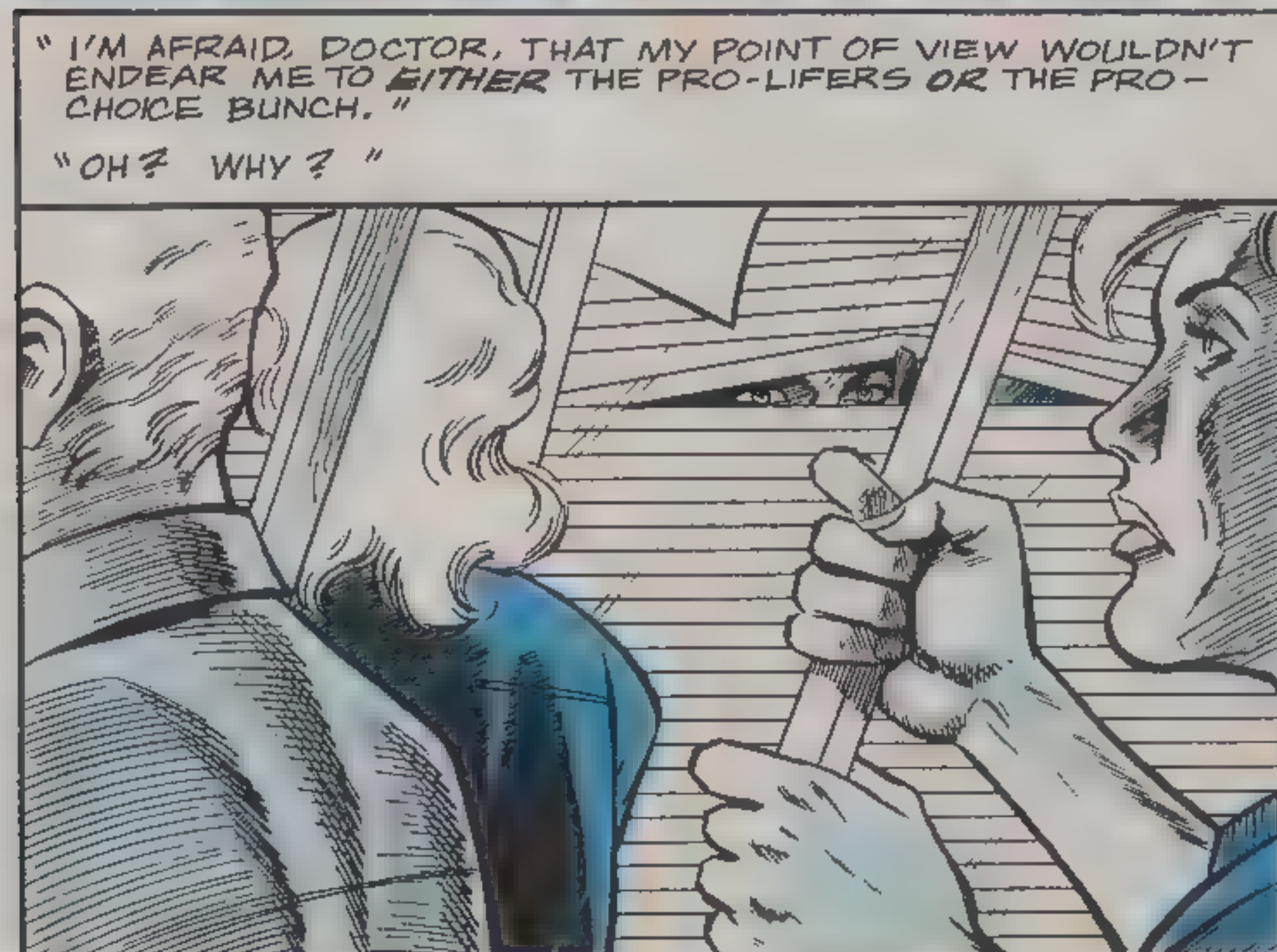






AND SINCE THAT RULING,  
ABORTION'S BECOME THE MOST  
COMMON SURGERY IN THE U.S.  
FOR WOMEN.

WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE,  
MS. TREE — LET'S KEEP OUR  
FACTS STRAIGHT. DO I  
DETECT A NOTE OF  
DISAPPROVAL?



"I'M AFRAID, DOCTOR, THAT MY POINT OF VIEW WOULDN'T  
ENDEAR ME TO EITHER THE PRO-LIFERS OR THE PRO-  
CHOICE BUNCH."

"OH? WHY?"

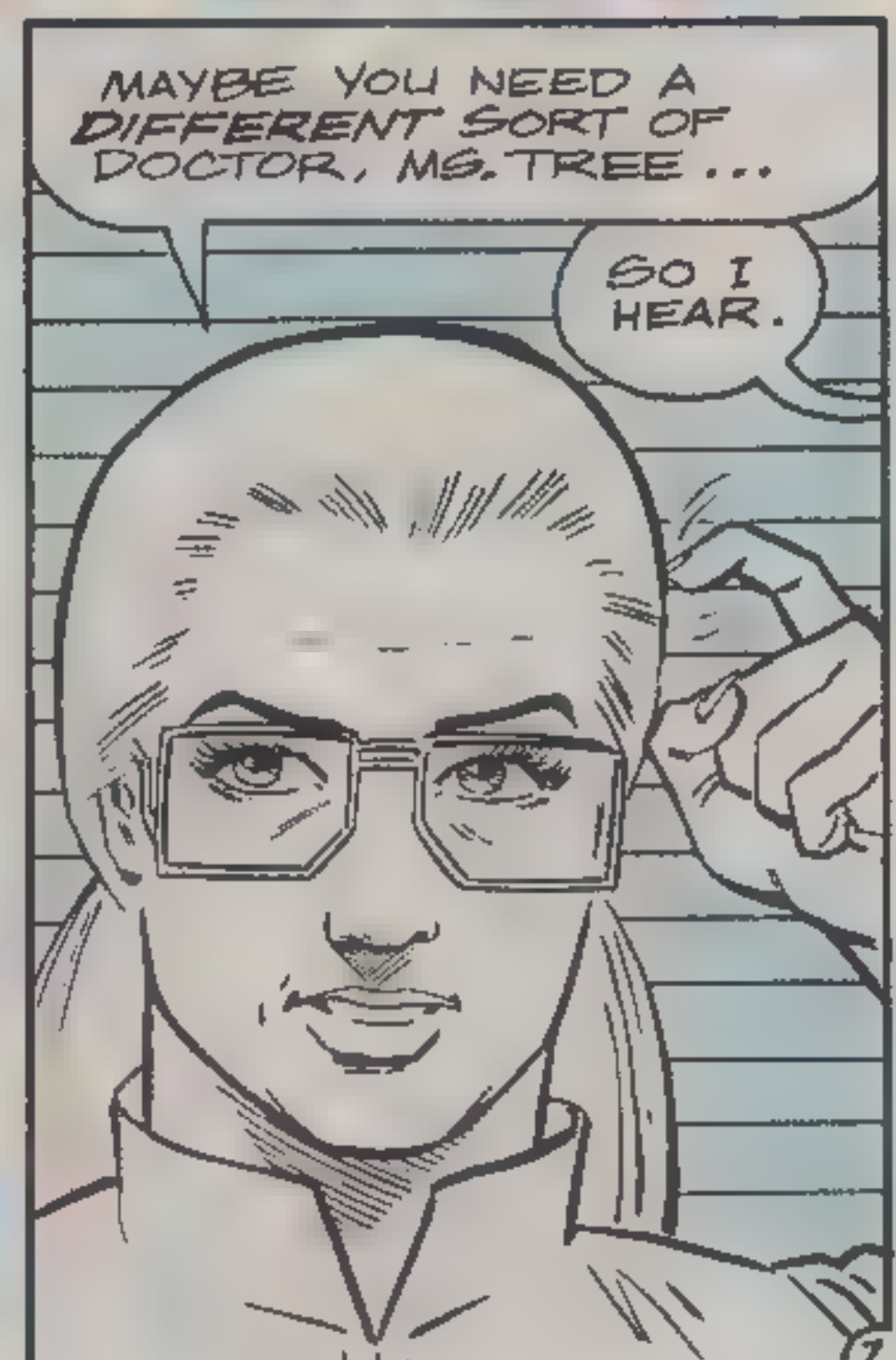


I FEEL ABORTION IS WRONG,  
PERSONALLY. MORALLY  
WRONG. BUT IT SHOULDN'T  
BE ILLEGAL.



THAT SOUNDS  
PRO-CHOICE.

MAYBE. BUT LEAD ME TO A WOMAN  
WHO'S HAD MORE THAN ONE ABORTION  
AND I'LL GLADLY KNOCK HER TEETH  
DOWN HER THROAT.



MAYBE YOU NEED A  
DIFFERENT SORT OF  
DOCTOR, MS. TREE ...

SO I  
HEAR.



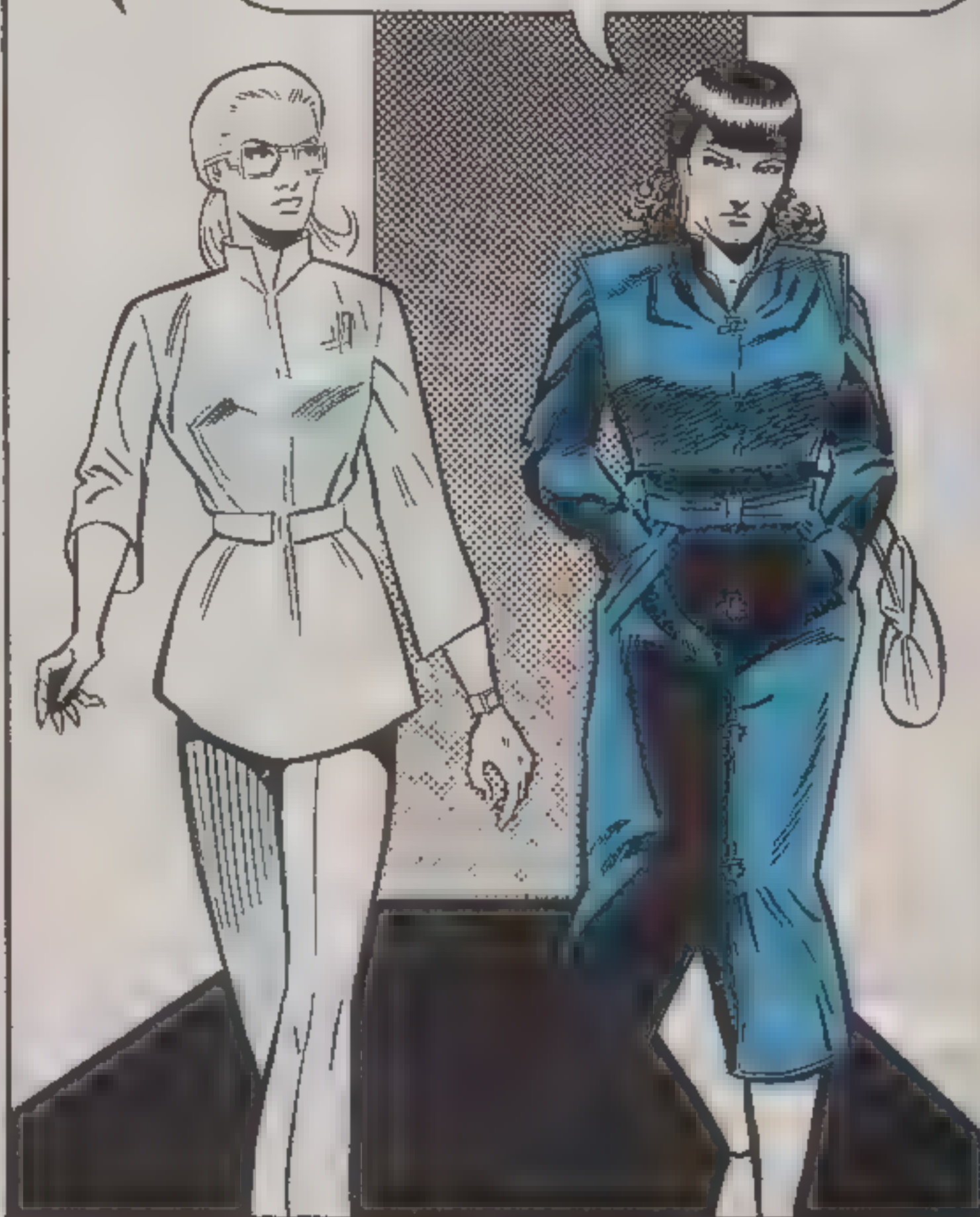
I TOLD HER IN DETAIL ABOUT ANGER AND HIS THREATS. I OFFERED TO GO TO THE POLICE WITH THE INFORMATION, BUT...

I'D LIKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRY TO TALK TO PETE AGAIN. I WOULD SUGGEST YOU INSTRUCT YOUR SECURITY PEOPLE ABOUT THE DANGER — AND YOU SHOULD WARN THE OTHERS ON YOUR STAFF —



I SEE. YOU'D LIKE TO TRY TO REASON WITH HIM — HEAD THIS OFF BEFORE IT RUINS HIS LIFE —

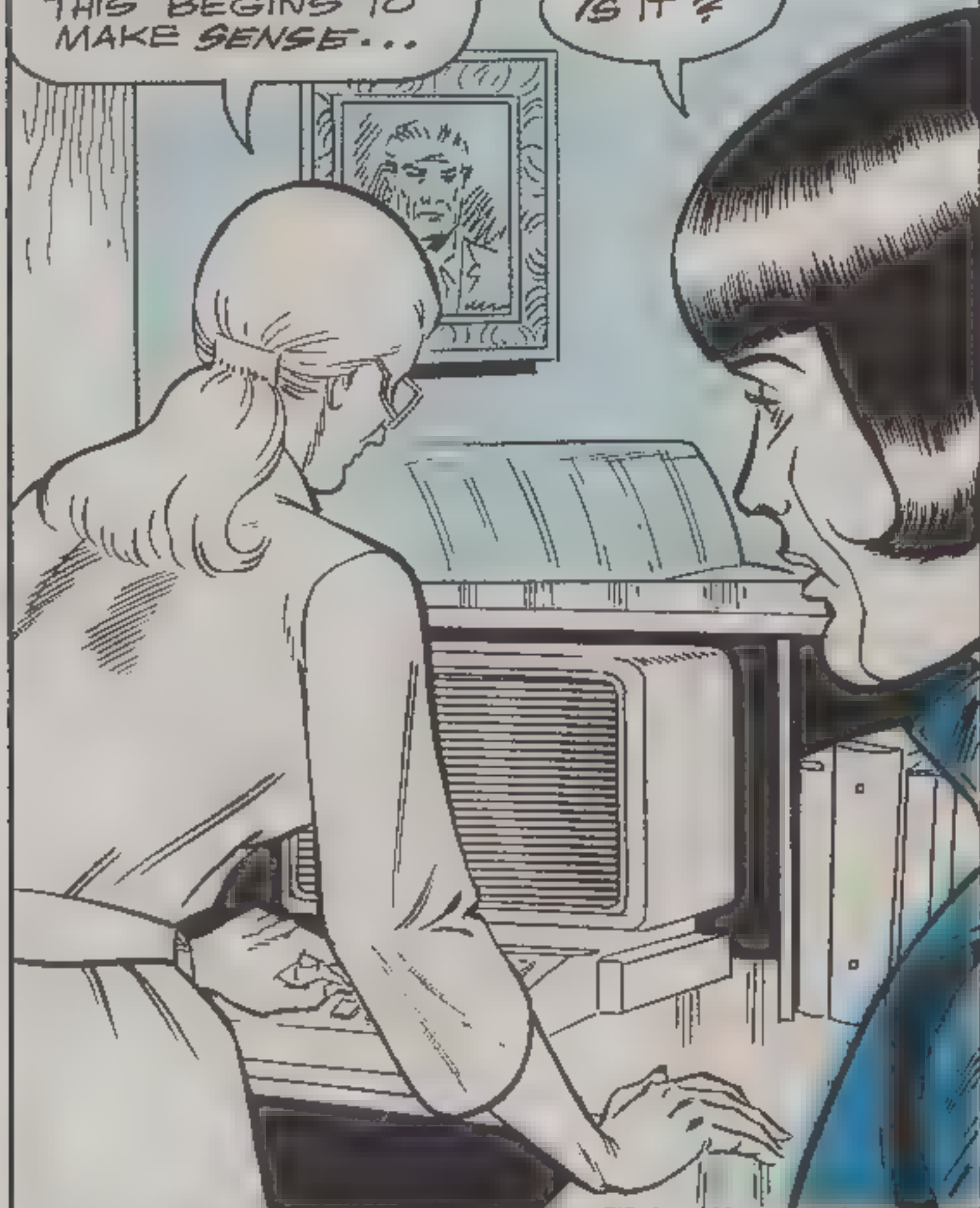
YES, BUT HE MAY BE PAST REASON... I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT. I UNDERSTAND OBSESSION — I UNDERSTAND REVENGE —



SHE SAID SHE WANTED TO CHECK SOMETHING — I FOLLOWED HER INTO THE RECEPTIONIST'S OFFICE —

YES. JUST AS I SUSPECTED, THIS BEGINS TO MAKE SENSE...

WHAT IS IT?



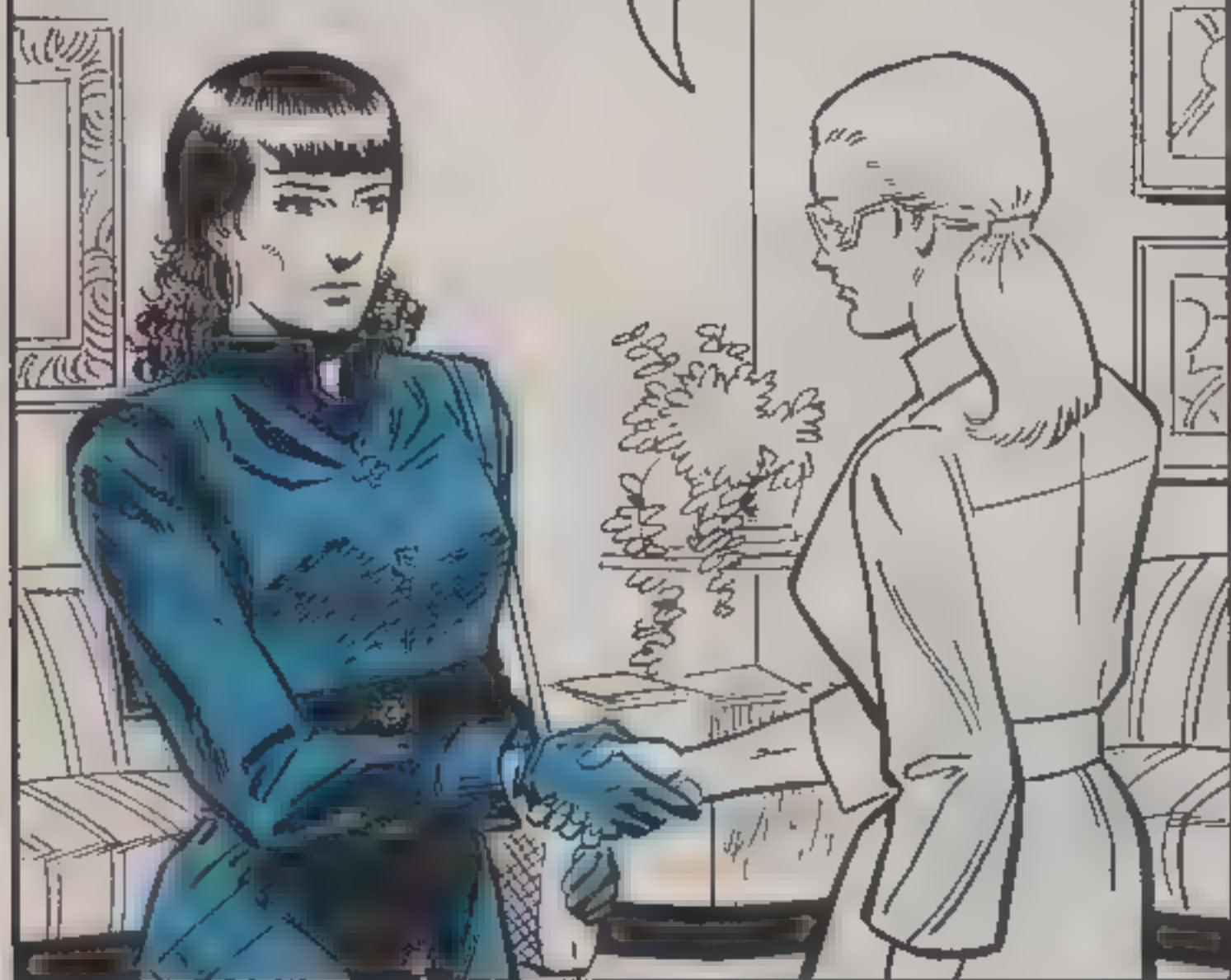
ANGER'S WIFE HAD HER ABORTION AT THIS VERY CLINIC.

I CAN GO TO THE POLICE NOW IF YOU WISH —

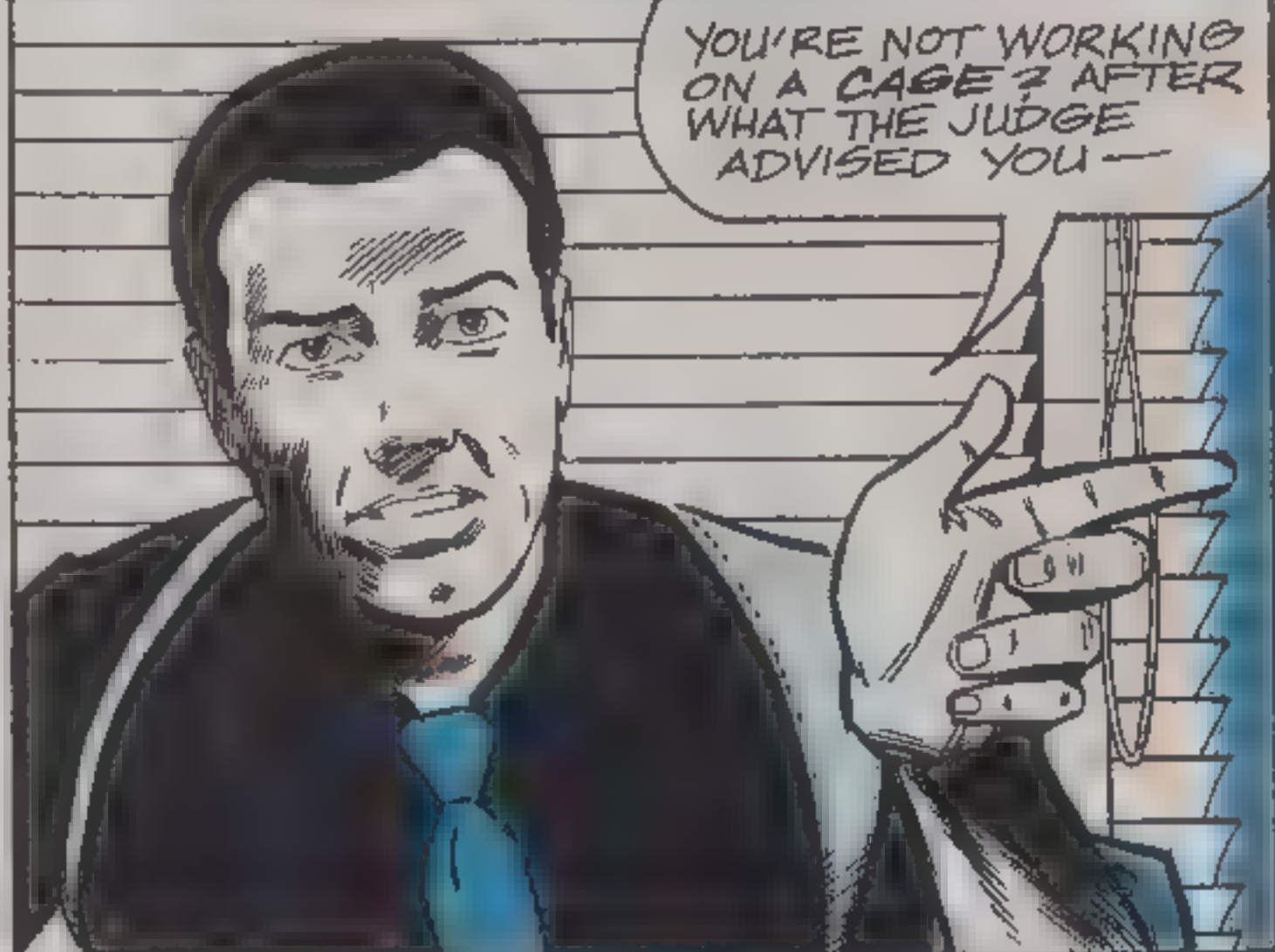




TALK TO YOUR MR. ANGER. TRY TO REASON WITH HIM. CALM HIM. SAVE HIM FROM HIMSELF. THEN LET ME KNOW AT ONCE —

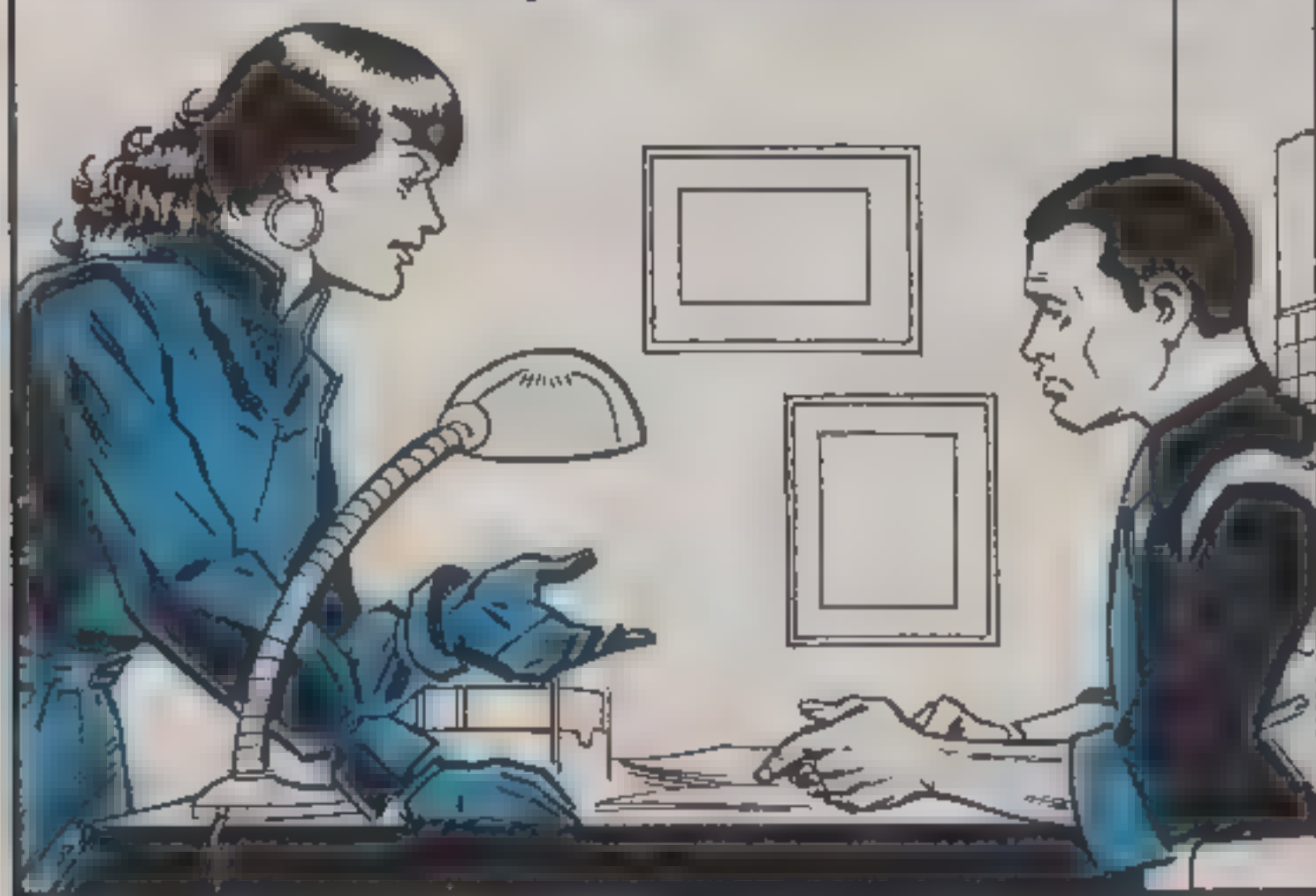


IT WAS GOOD OF HER TO GO ALONG WITH ME. I DIDN'T FIND HER THE WARMEST PERSON I EVER MET, BUT SHE DID COME THROUGH — COULD I SAY THE SAME FOR MY FRIEND LT. VALER?

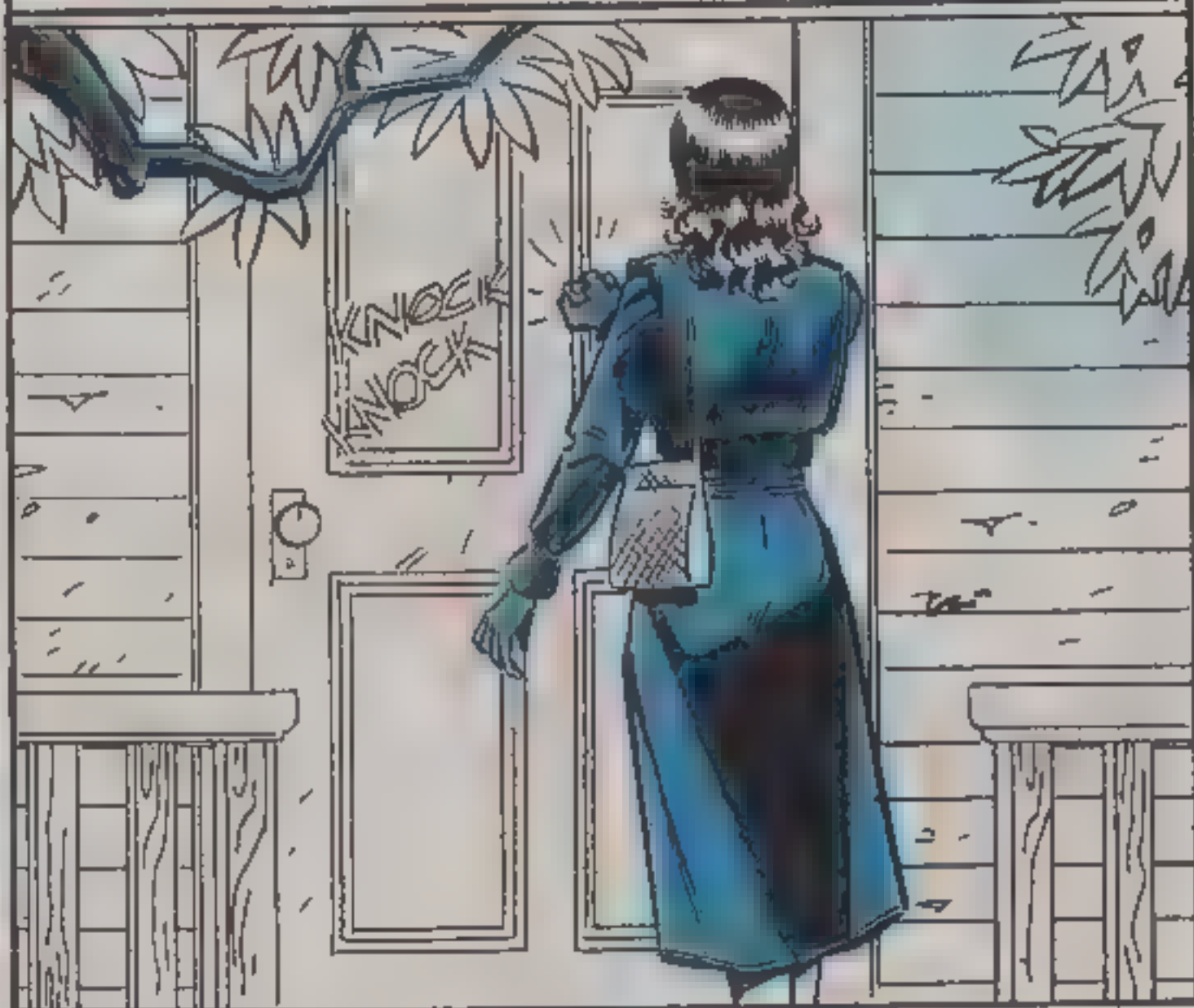


YOU'RE NOT WORKING ON A CASE? AFTER WHAT THE JUDGE ADVISED YOU —

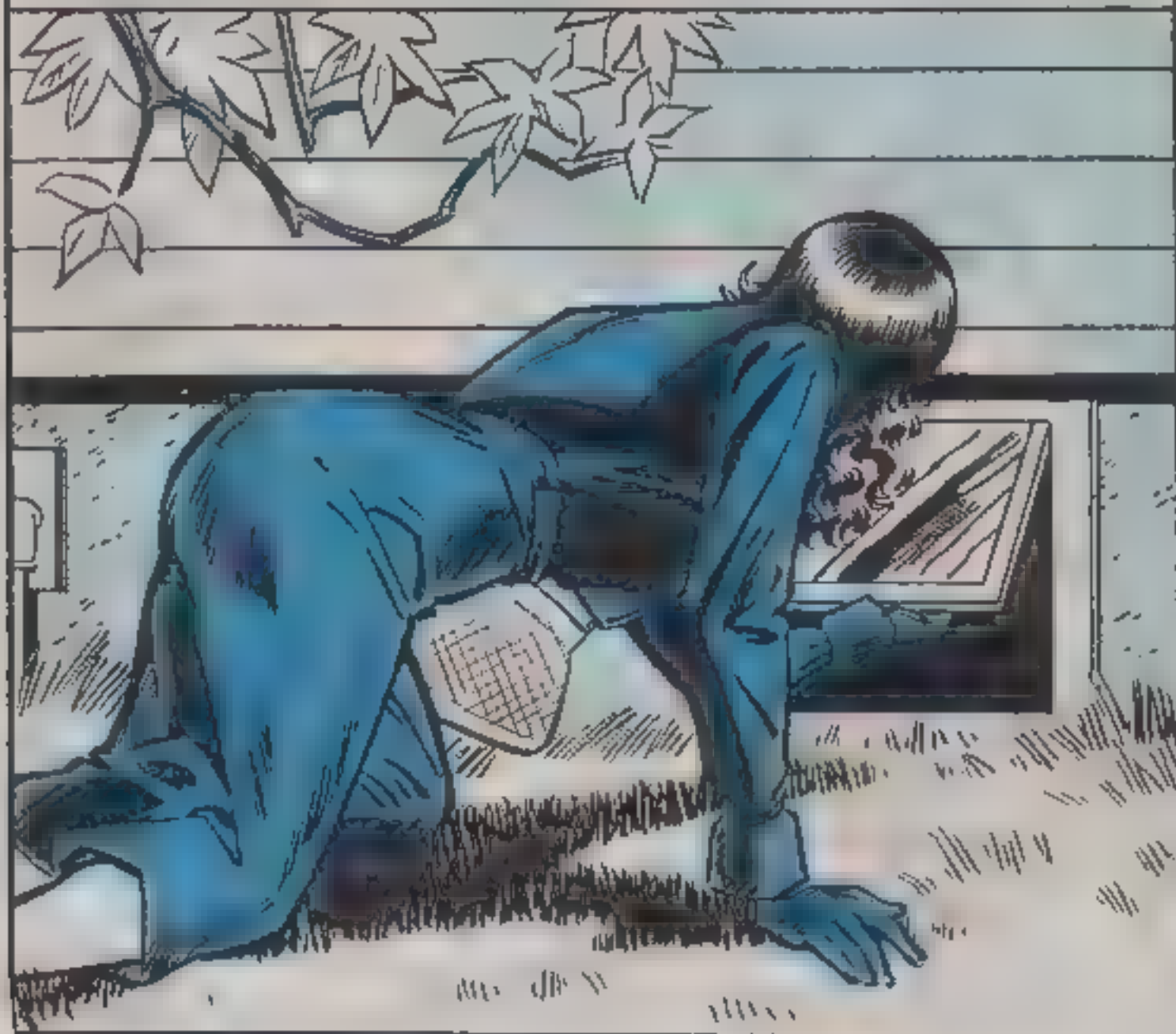
IT'S NOT A CASE, EXACTLY. I NEED TO CHECK UP ON ONE OF MIKE'S OLD PARTNERS. HE'S OFF THE FORCE, BUT I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE A CURRENT ADDRESS —



THE ADDRESS WAS A SURPRISE — BECAUSE IT WAS ANGER'S OLD ONE; THE BUNGALOW HE'D SHARED WITH HIS LATE WIFE PAM —



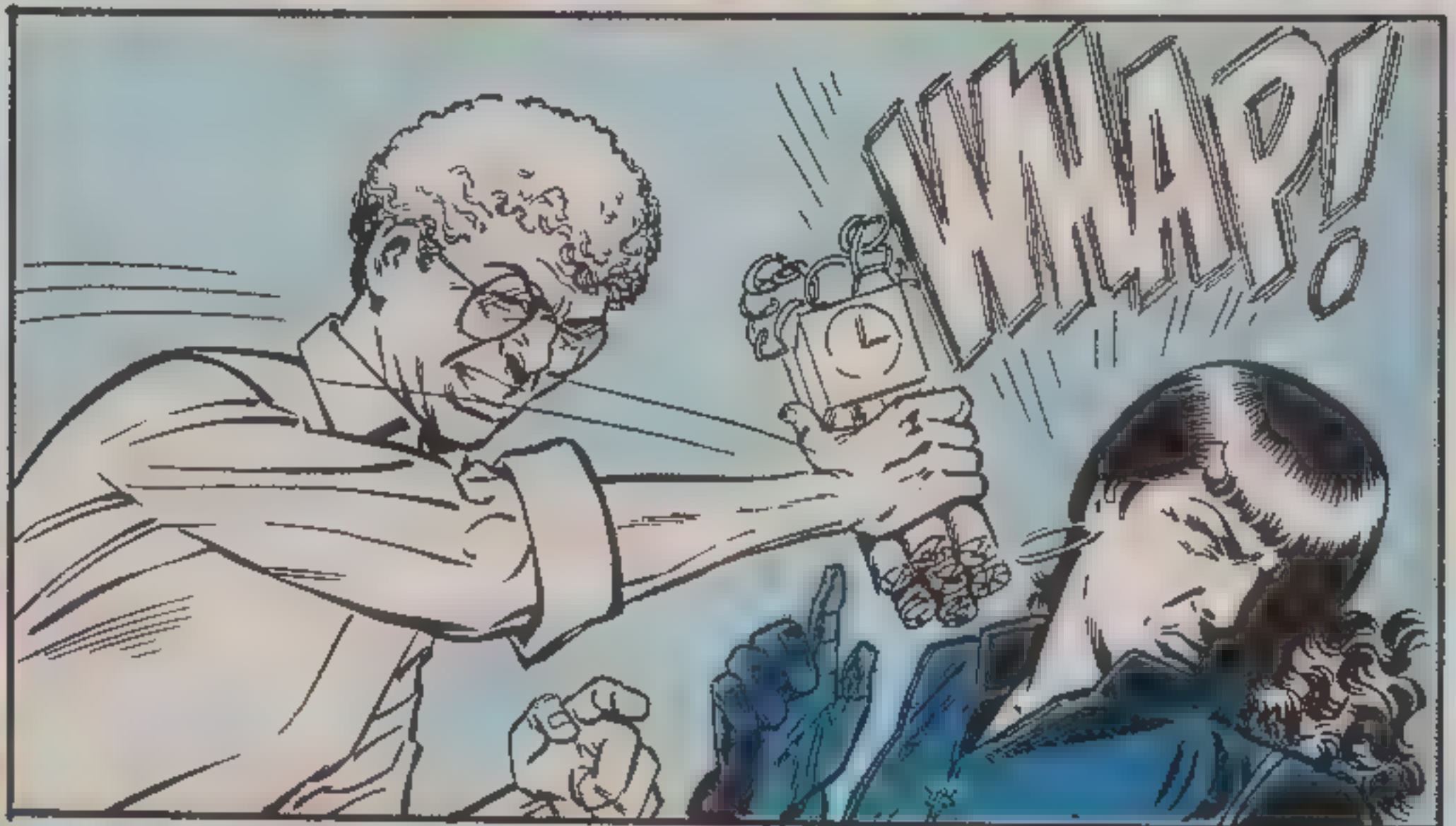
NOBODY SEEMED TO BE HOME, BUT WHEN DID THAT EVER STOP A PRIVATE DETECTIVE?



ONLY SOMEBODY DID SEEM TO BE HOME, IN A ROOM TUCKED AWAY IN A CORNER OF THE BASEMENT —







— TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE —



*voices on it - is known as being one of the liveliest and intelligent around. We welcome the "name" letterhacks and the first-time scribes, alike. And speak of the devil...*

Dear Max and Terry,

Say I think I'm beginning to appreciate this mag! For instance, your approach to violence. Now, a good fist fight is not all out of place in detective fiction or, heaven knows, in comics but (unlike some comics I could name) you don't take every opportunity to shove another fight on us. In fact, you sometimes **avoid** the opportunity. And I think that this "underplaying" can be very effective. For instance, in #20 on page 6, one panel shows Ms. Tree surrounded by thugs, the next shows her lying unconscious in an alley. That certainly gets the point across that she was beaten up and it does so quickly and effectively. Also, a beating (as opposed to a fight) is not as exciting to witness, so it probably speeds up the narrative flow too. However, maybe we should be shown the beating just because it demonstrates one of the less attractive aspects of Ms. Tree's work. (Of course, we do see her slapped around later in the issue, so I guess you covered the bases on that matter.) I also find it interesting that we are spared a scene in which Ms. Tree would not be operating from strength (or **with** strength) as she usually is. If I had one objection to the scene, it would be that she didn't **look** roughed up though she must have been in pretty bad shape to be rendered unconscious.

This underplaying of violence early in the story made the big shootout scene all the more startling and effective. She was a rather horrific figure, blasting away with her automatic weapon.

There seems to be ongoing debate in the lettercol as to how to view Ms. Tree, in a moral sense. Some readers have said that since you show her performing certain acts, you must be attempting to justify or glorify those acts, whereas you say that you are not necessarily condoning her actions but rather attempting to portray a complex (and not always sympathetic) character. I will be very interested to see how this matter proceeds.

It is certainly a common assumption that an author believes in the correctness of his protagonists' actions. (Indeed, as I recall, Arthur C. Clark felt obliged to put a notice in his novel *CHILDHOOD'S END* to the effect that "The views expressed in this book are **not** those of the author.") However, there is a good deal of justification for such a view. If an author shows a character performing certain acts and that character is portrayed as "good" in the story, then it is not illogical to assume that the author thinks that the character's actions are good. And this is aided by the fact that in modern fiction, so many characters are either all good or all evil. With a more complex character, such assumptions quickly break down. Also, that the character himself may believe in his own correctness, but it is important to pay attention to the author's depiction of society's reaction to the character's acts. So far, you appear to be handling this delicate problem pretty well.

You know, for the life me, I couldn't figure out the Mike Mist mystery this time! In fact, I couldn't even figure out what mystery we were supposed to solve! I guess I'm a real loser in that department!

I'm flattered that you think that the publication of my letter in #20 means that you've "arrived." But why not preserve that cherished moment of acceptance with a lovely certificate stating that your lettercol is officially recognized by T.M. Maple? Only \$15 (US funds only, please!) postpaid. Think about it. Isn't it a small price to pay for a lifetime of treasured memories?

As you can see by now, you don't have to worry that you will only get the one letter from T.M. Maple (as you said in #20's lettercol). In fact, you'll probably be getting letters from me long after you'd started to wish that I would stop!

T.M. Maple, WESTON, ONT.

*We'd like to buy a T.M. Maple certificate, but we just spent our last fifteen bucks on a T.E. Pouncey plaque. (The Mike Mist mystery T.M. refers to is our centerspread preview - that is, ad - for MS. TREE 3-D.)*

Dear Max,

I would like to address comment (if I may) to Randall Corry, whose letter appeared in MS. TREE #19. In his missive he says, and I quote, "It is not the prostitution, pornography, homosexuality, pedophilia, promiscuity, etc. which bothers

me. I was not raised to believe them wrong unless a person is forced into it or hurt." I may be misreading Randall's comment, but it seems to me to be incredibly naive.

You dealt adequately with the pedophilia line. (How can a 12 year-old make an adult decision about sex?) Still, without getting up on my soapbox, does Randall honestly believe that all of the others are harmless?

I am neither a puritan or a prude by anybody's definition. I do, however, believe that all of those classifications are -- to a greater or lesser degree -- wrong. First of all, the monies obtained through prostitution and pornography go directly or indirectly into the coffers of organized crime, making them unquestionably wrong. Sure, sure, there is "clean" pornography like *PLAYBOY* and its ilk, where the girls are pure and wholesome, live next door. Still, don't you think it's pretty degrading that the only way these girls make money is by showing us their teats?

On the subject of homosexuality, I agree with Max that anything consenting adults do in private is their own business. Personally though, I'm getting real tired of gays attempting to force straights to accept their lifestyle as a viable alternative (I don't parade down Fifth Avenue proclaiming my right to have sex with women). Let them screw each other if they want, but again, let them do it in the privacy of their own homes. (I would also wish to point out that historically speaking, every culture that has allowed homosexuality to flourish has deteriorated and collapsed under its own weight -- Babylon, Rome -- so much for homosexuality being "harmless.")

As for promiscuity, I don't subscribe to Hollywood's philosophy that you should have had sex seven or eight times by your 16th birthday (in consenting adult, the operative word is ADULT). If you (as a consenting ADULT) want to have sex with your girlfriend (also a CONSENTING adult), go ahead, just be smart enough to protect yourselves from disease, and unwanted pregnancy because either one would be harmful.

Thus none of the above mentioned categories are truly "harmless." Most women involved in prostitution and pornography are forced into it (either as runaways picked up by pimps and chickenhawks, or because selling their bodies is the only option offered to them by a male-dominated, smut-filled society). Also, both practices are supported (and support) organized crime. With the other two (pedophilia already being previously dismissed), it is safe to say that they are not only helping to transmit an epidemic of AIDS and VD, but they ain't doing much to help sustain the family unit, which is the core of this country's greatness.

In ending, let me state that both the porno film maker from issue 17 and the sex pervert (Billy Bob) from #18 were scumbags, and deserved to die. Perhaps if their kind were dealt with like this in real life, we wouldn't have to worry so much for the safety of our children. I have a five year-old daughter, and degenerates like these two (and their real-life counterparts) scare the living Hell out of me. I applaud not only Max and Terry for presenting this story, but Deni for publishing it. Maybe it will shock us enough to actually do something about it.

Robin Banks, CT

*I find your comments interesting and well-articulated, Robin, even if I am still too much of a child of the late '60s to share your conservative outlook. Some of your points do strike me as simplistic - for example, implicitly blaming the fall of Rome and Babylon on homosexuality. And heterosexuals hardly need to parade, since heterosexuals don't have a large problem being discriminated against for their sexual preferences. (Heterosexuals **are** sometimes discriminated against for their sexual preferences, of course; oral sex remains illegal in many places, for example, and then there's interracial sex and premarital sex, not to mention extramarital - none of which seems parade material, however.) Anyway, it's understandable and necessary - for any second-class citizen to holler until first-class citizenship is granted. And if the mob dominates pornography (and I doubt that "most" women involved are "forced" into it), might not the reason be that old-fashioned puritan ways of looking at sex made it "dirty" and drove eroticism underground? Your comment about the family unit is a sobering one as is the relationship of the spread of AIDS and VD to a more promiscuous society. Incidentally, next month's SWAK will feature two thoughtful letters from gays offended by the homosexuality of our villain "Billy Bob." In the meantime Terry and I will be taking time out from working on MS. TREE to look at the teats in the latest perfect bound issue of PLAYBOY.*



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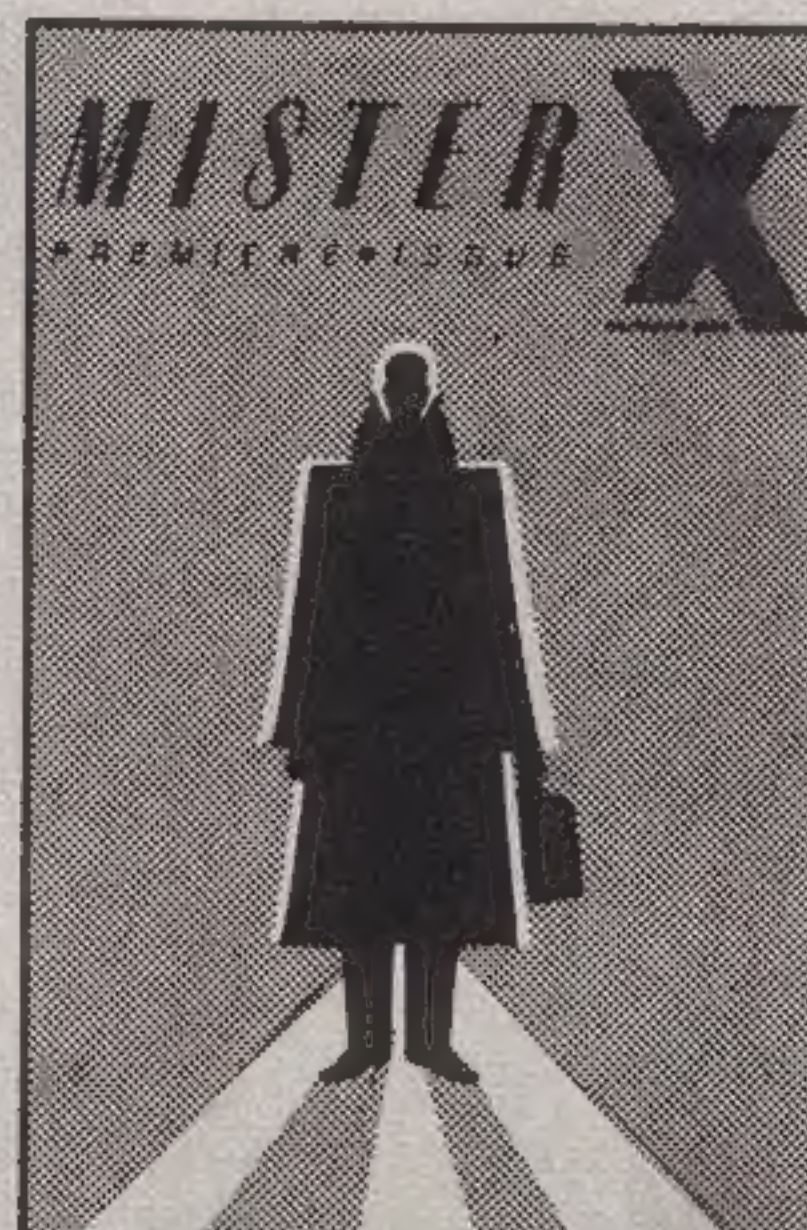
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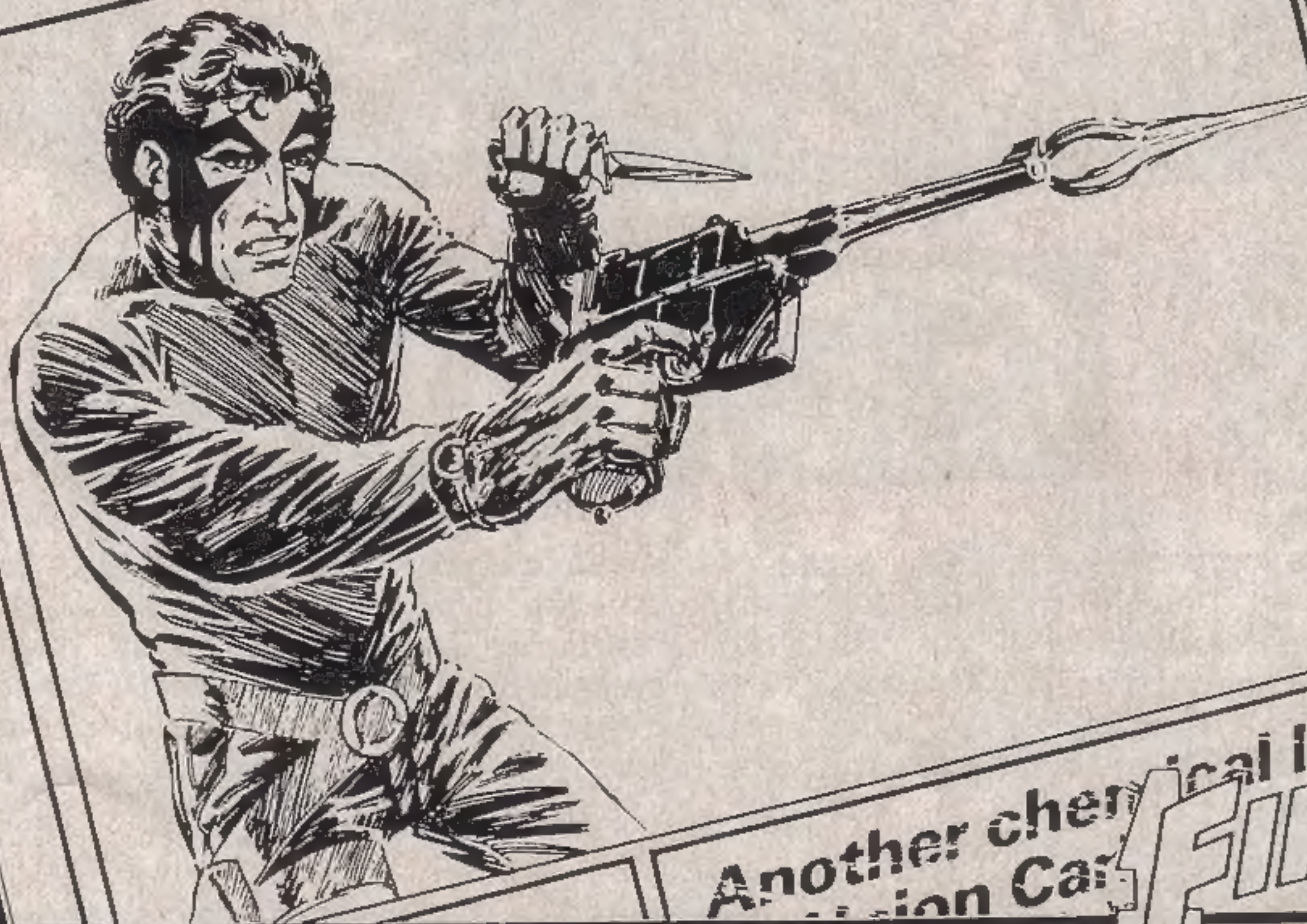
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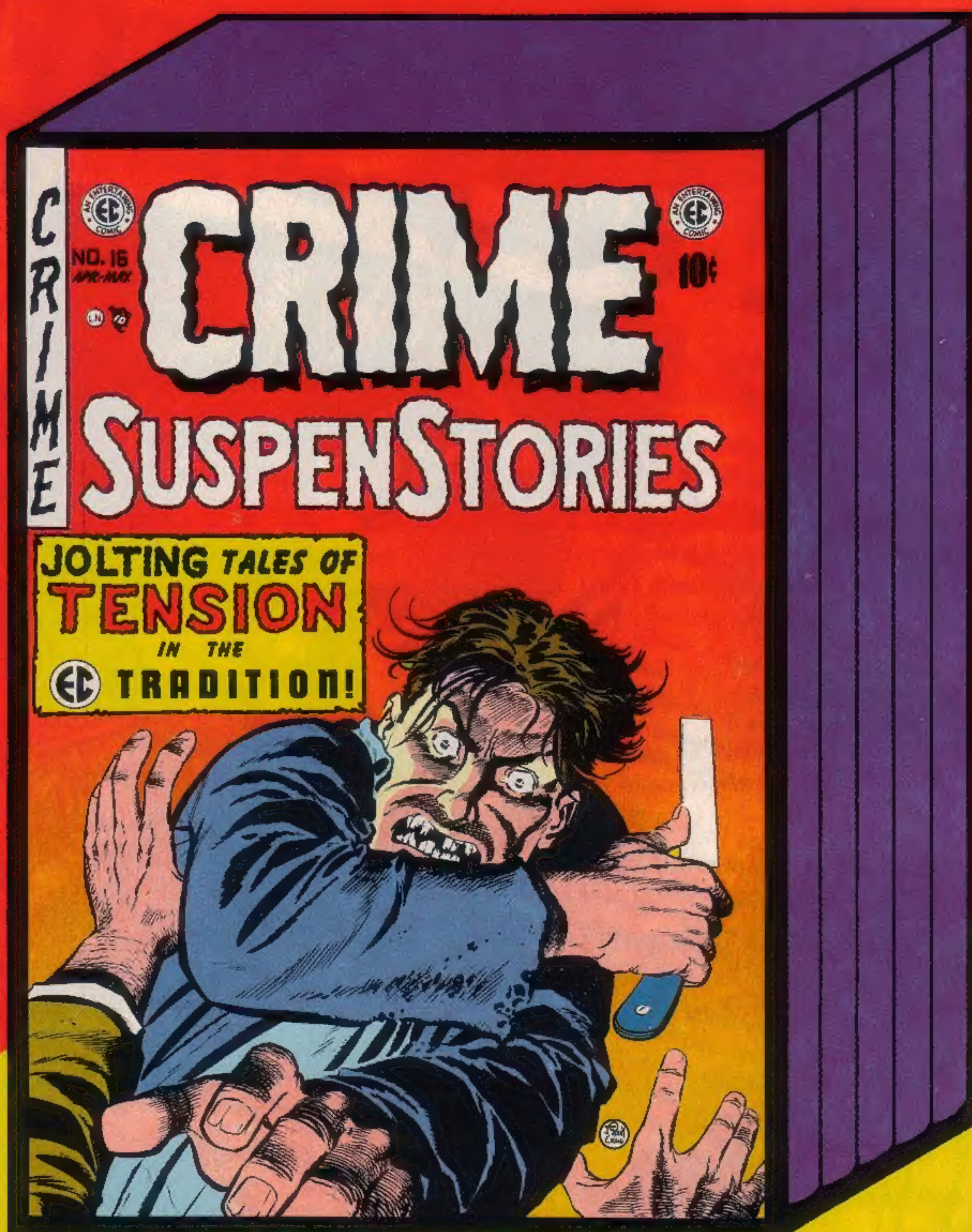


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